

ADBUSTERS WHOLE BRAIN CATALOG



access to therapies

Summer 2010



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NORTH AMERICAN EDITION



*ANXIOUS?
FUNNY MOOD?
THINK YOU'RE GOING CRAZY?
THIS IS FOR YOU.*

Back in 1968, Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* penetrated the public consciousness, igniting our collective imagination and helping give birth to a movement that has changed the world. The debut cover of the *Whole Earth Catalog* displayed the first ever photograph of our entire planet in all its blue-green glory. And now, 50 years later, we have chosen a photograph of the human brain for the cover of *Adbusters* in the hope of giving birth to another great movement: the environmental movement of the mind.



What's my damage?

WHOLE BRAIN CATALOG



WHOLE BRAIN TEXT

ANXIOUS

ANXIOUS

HOPEFUL

DEPRESSED

CALM

CONTENTS





What is Consciousness?

Our brain contains 100 billion neurons (nerve cells). Our gray matter. Each neuron has an axon – a little arm – that transmits information in the form of electrical impulses to the dendrites – receivers – of nearby neurons. Dendrites branch twig-like from each neuron. Between axon and dendrite, the synapse is the point of connection. Axons commune with dendrites across the synaptic gap.

When neurons “fire,” they emit a rat-a-tat-tat of electrical pulses that travel down the axon and arrive at its terminal endings, which secrete from tiny pockets a neurotransmitter (dopamine, say, or serotonin). The neurotransmitter ferries the message across the synaptic abyss and binds to the synapse, whereupon the synapse converts it back into an electrical pulse ...

What blows my mind is this: A single neuron can make between 1,000 and 10,000 connections. At this moment our neurons are making, it could be, a million billion connections.

What this electrical/chemical transaction gives us is culture: nail polish, Poland, comic books. Otis Redding belting out “Try a Little Tenderness” at the 1967 Monterey International Pop Music Festival, along with its memory, its YouTube reenactment, its recordings and coverings and remixings, its moment in history.

The geography of the brain ought to be taught in school, like the countries of the world. The deeply folded cortex forms the outer layer. There are the twin hemispheres, right brain and left brain. (We may be of two minds.) There are the four lobes: frontal in front, occipital (visual

cortex) in back, parietal (motor cortex) on top, and temporal behind the ears. There’s the limbic system (seat of emotion and memory) at the center. There’s the brain stem, whose structures keep us awake (required for consciousness) or put us to sleep (required for regeneration of neurotransmitters).

The brain also has glial cells, white matter. Glial cells surround and support neurons, carry nutrients to neurons and eat dead neurons. Some glial cells regulate transmission and pulverize post-transmission neurotransmitters. Others produce myelin, which surrounds and protects axons. Glial cells are no longer thought to be mere glue. When stimulated, they make, not electricity as neurons do, but waves of calcium atoms. They also produce neurotransmitters – glutamate (excitatory) and adenosine (inhibitory). We may not know what they are up to, but we know they’re up to something.

So there you have the brain: a three-pound bagful of neurons, electrical pulses, chemical messengers, glial cells. There, too, you have the biological basis of the mind. “Anything can happen,” says the poet C. D. Wright, “in the strange cities of the mind.” And whatever does happen – any thought, mood, song, perception, delusion – is provided to us by this throbbing sack of cells and cerebral substances.

But what, then, is consciousness?

Priscilla Long, “Our Mind-Boggling Brain,”
from *The American Scholar*, Winter 2010

Can party

Love



©Anastasia Cazabon

God

The power of now

Try to stop thinking for 30 seconds.

You cannot do it can you?

Go ahead try again.

Can you calm the incessant chatter of your busy, busy mind?

If you can, then you're ready to start a new adventure. You're ready to begin.

I sit in a chair, not cross-legged on a cushion, not on the floor with knees cracking and hips grinding. No, just sitting with a straight back. The easy stuff.

Now the mind takes over ... slowly, ever so slowly with attention moving to the breath, in and out, in and out.

Thoughts come ... eventually, not a cascading, just one thought and then another and then – a solitary thought ... where did that come from?

Mind moves back to the breath, awareness of body gradually centering in and out of the chest, finding the heart.

A flash of purest white light and then darkness again ... Now, splintering out of the darkness at the edge of the field, a white spark, a crack.

And then back to the darkness. Breathing in and out, in and out, just sitting.

Slowly down from the speed and absorption of momentarily being out of body, out of mind ... somewhere beyond.

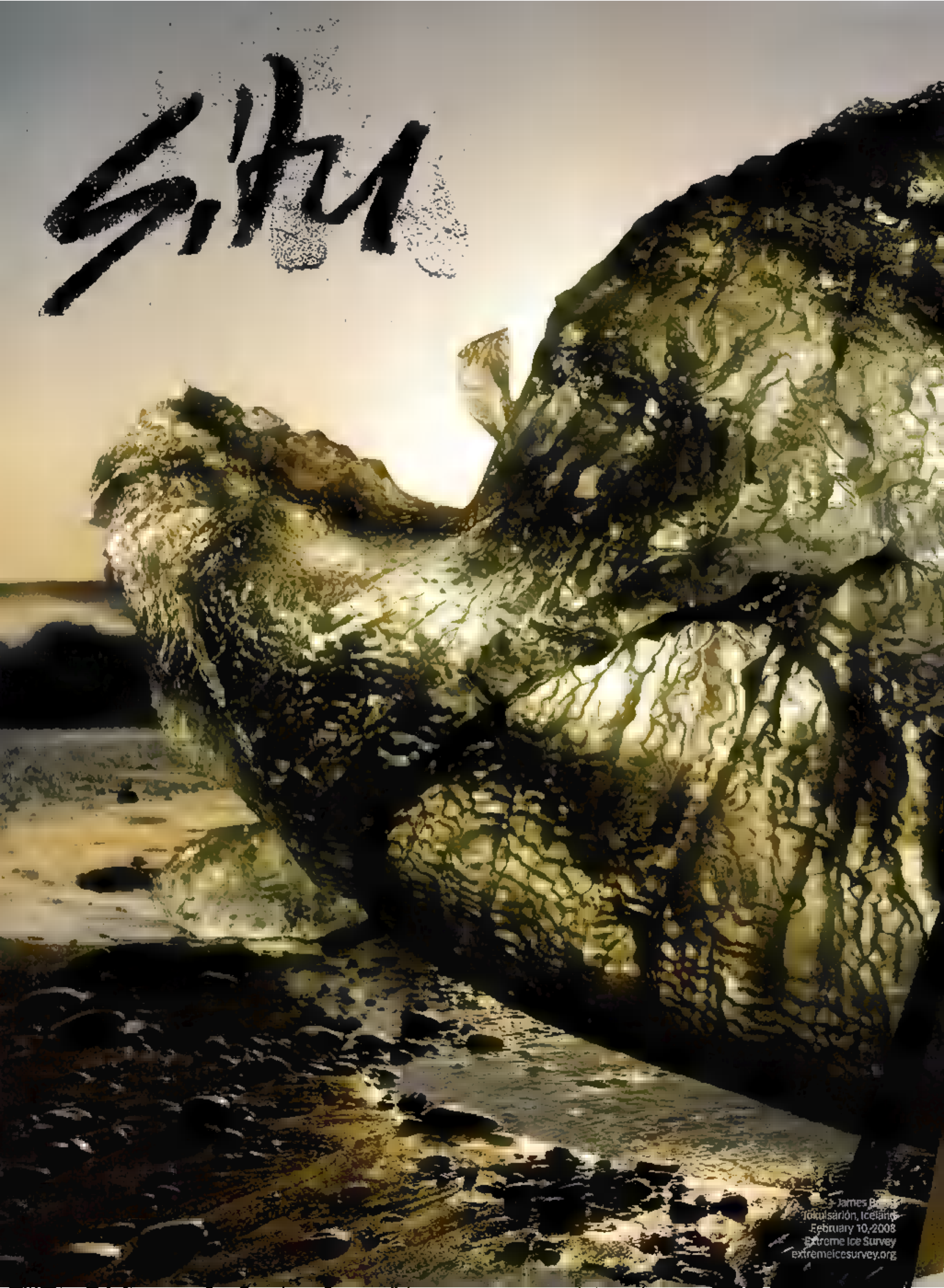
Eyes open now, wide open ... yes, to that same old world that I know so well. Cracking fingers and stretching spine, and well, wow, just nothing to say.

Richard Hayward



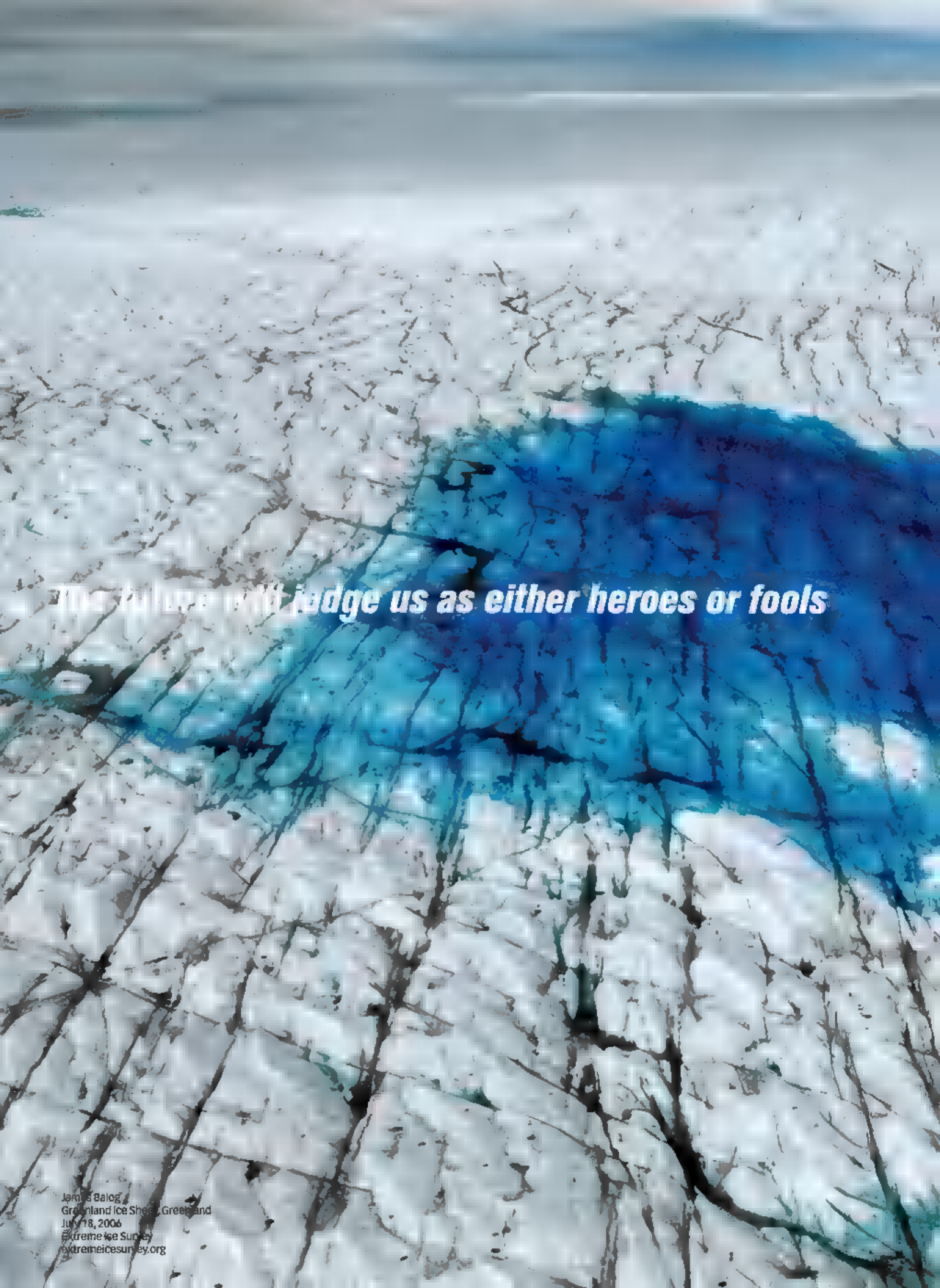
All of Gandhi's worldly possessions

5.11.11





The situationists believed that ordinary people have all the tools they need for revolution ... the only thing missing is a perceptual shift – a tantalizing glimpse of a new way of being – that suddenly brings everything into focus.



The future will judge us as either heroes or fools

We have daily attention on the state of the planet. In our scientific life, doctors reading the pulse of the Earth - our collective body. Our temperature is not to rise by two degrees Celsius, at least in the coming years, our ice caps are predicted to melt within 25 years, our oceans sooner. Our sea levels are rising at a rapid rate, our weather patterns are changing dramatically. ... a small fraction of our global infrastructure. There is still time to respond, and there is an imperative that is clear - and that is what we are - with the fact that the Earth has limits, that we can't go on doing things that are bad for the health of the whole ecosystem.

The time to act is now, and it may come sooner than we expect. We are told we have a small window of time to act. It is not at all clear, after that, this is what their own minds and we will have to accept the changes as best we can.

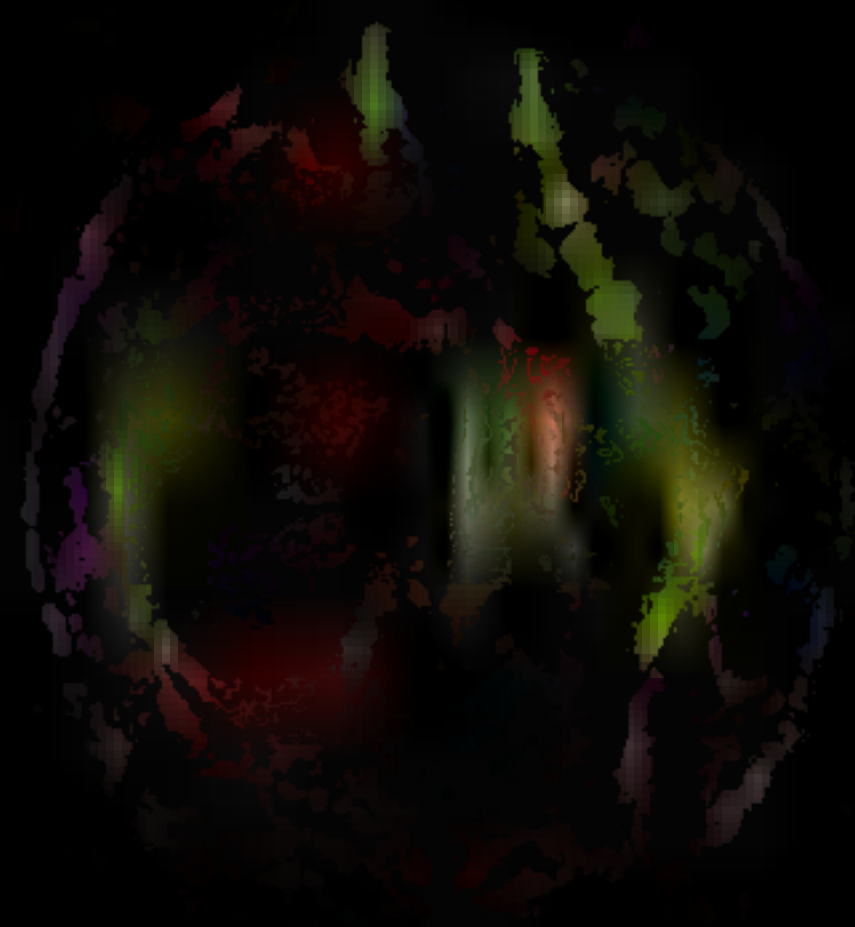
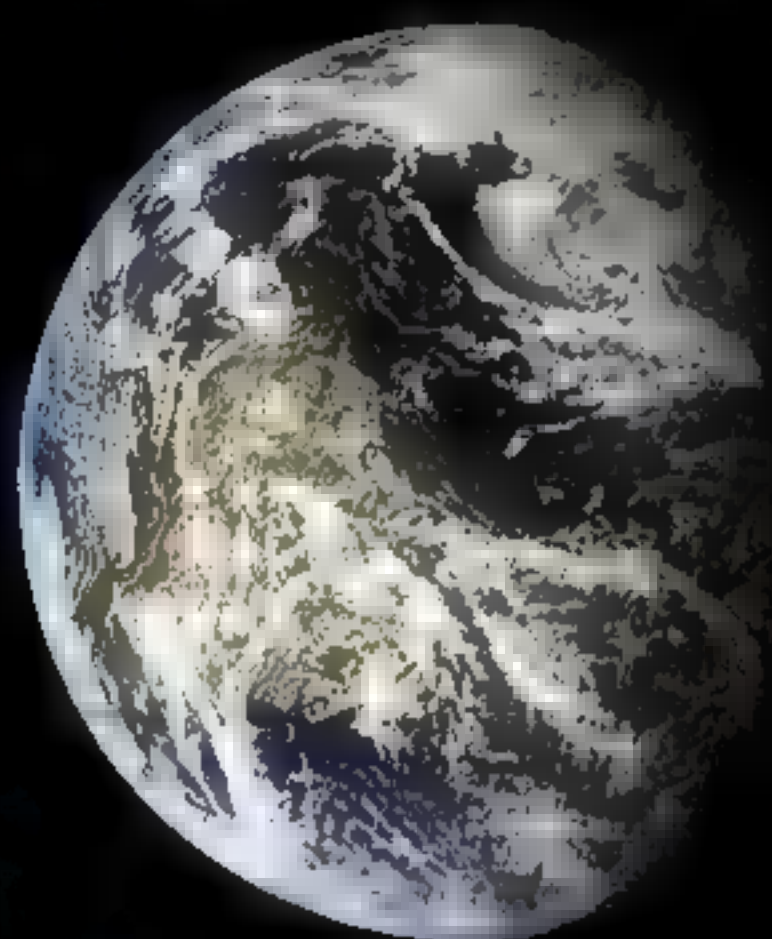
I know the climate is changing. What of our political state? I know the climate is changing.

Is the human species suicidal? Apparently so. ... that is, life is everything on which it depends, but apparently, in denial of this ... Unsettled by the needs? Absolutely. We are as human as we are not totally dependent on these things, as things we can afford to do. ... of which our world is made. ... We seem to have an increasing narcissism, such that the ... elements of the world appear to be there to please and amuse us.

SLAS (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997) lecture. Chapter on the Earth's environment.

ECO

PSYCHO



EXTRACTION

NOISE

BIOTOXIN

INFOTOXIN

TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

TOXIC CULTURE


BIODIVERSITY

INFODIVERSITY

ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

MENTAL BREAKDOWN





ECOLOGY OF **MIND** *THE BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT*

by Kalle Lasn and Micah White

For thousands of generations we humans grew up in nature. Our teachers were flora and fauna and our textbooks thunderstorms and stars in the night sky. Our minds were like the forests, oases and deltas around which our cultures germinated: chaotic, wild, fecund.

But in the last couple generations, we have largely abandoned the natural world, immersing ourselves in virtual realms. Today the synthetic environment rivals nature as a driving force in our lives, and the mental environment has become the terrain where our fate as humans will be decided. By emigrating from nature we've done something more than just move domiciles – we have fundamentally altered the context in which we live our lives.

Along with this transition to a new psychic realm, we have also seen the exponential rise of mental illnesses. Globally, humanity is now suffering from an epidemic of uncontrollable anxieties, mood disorders and depression. The United Nations predicts that mental disease will be bigger than heart disease by 2020.

Why is this happening? Why are we breaking down mentally?

If you ask psychologists what increases the general loading of psychopathology on the human animal, they will list a lot of things: the breakdown of community, the insecurity of social roles, the stresses of modernity and globalization and maybe even the chemicals in the air, water and food that may be affecting our brains in unknown ways. Others blame the thousands of aggressive, erotically charged marketing messages our brains absorb every day as the culprit. And still others say that heavy internet use leads to addictions and depression and that the digital revolution may be rewiring our brains in unhealthy ways. Nobody knows for sure.

But it's tantalizing to guess.

What follows is just a beginning, an introduction to some of the mental pollutants, information viruses and psychic shocks we have to deal with daily – a survey of the threats to our "ecology of mind."

NOISE

For countless generations the ambient noise was rain and wind and people talking. Now the soundtrack is full-spectrum, undecodable. From the dull roar of rush-hour traffic to the drone of your fridge and the buzz of your monitor, various kinds of noise (blue, white, pink, black) are continuously seeping into our brains. And the volume is constantly being cranked up. Two, perhaps three generations have already become stimulation-addicted. Can't work without background music. Can't jog without earphones. Can't sleep without an iPhone tucked under the pillow. The essence of our postmodern age may be found in this kind of incessant brain buzz. Trying to make sense of the world above the din is like living next to a freeway – you get used to it, but at a severely diminished level of mindfulness and well-being.

Quiet feels foreign now, but quiet could be just what we need. Silence may be to a healthy mind what clean air and water are to a healthy body. In a cleaner, quieter mental environment, we may find our mood calming and depression lifting.

INFOTOXINS AND INFOVIRUSES

From the moment your radio alarm sounds in the morning to the wee hours of late-night TV, micro-jolts of commercial pollution flow into your brain at the rate of about 3,000 marketing messages per day. Every day, an estimated 12 billion display ads, three million radio commercials, more than 200,000 TV commercials and an unknown number of online ads and spam emails are dumped into our collective unconscious. Corporate advertising is the single largest psychological experiment ever carried out on the human race. Yet, its impact on us remains unstudied and largely unknown.

THE EROSION OF EMPATHY

The first time we saw a starving child on a late-night TV ad, we were appalled. Maybe we sent money. But as these images became more familiar, our capacity for compassion waned. Eventually these ads started to annoy us, even repulse us. And now we feel nothing when we see another starving kid.

The average North American witnesses half a dozen acts of violence (killings, gunshots, assaults, car chases, rapes) per hour of prime-time TV watched. As for sex in the media and porn on the internet, we all know what catches our attention and stops us from zapping the channels: pouting lips, pert breasts, buns of steel, buoyant superyouth. Growing up in a violent, erotically charged media environment alters our psyches at a bedrock level. It distorts our sexuality – the way you feel when someone suddenly puts ■ hand on your shoulder or hugs you or flirts with you – how we think about ourselves as sexual beings. And the constant flow of commercially scripted, violence-laced, pseudo-sex makes us more voyeuristic, insatiable and aggressive. Then, somewhere along the line, nothing – not even rape, torture, genocide, or war porn – shocks us anymore.

The commercial media are to the mental environment what factories are to the physical environment. A factory dumps pollution into the water or air because that's the most efficient way to produce plastic or wood pulp or steel. A TV station or website pollutes the cultural environment because that's the most efficient way to produce audiences. It pays to pollute. The psychic fallout is just the cost of putting on the show.

LOSS OF INFODIVERSITY

The information we consume is increasingly flat and homogenized. Designed to reach millions, it often lacks nuance, complexity and context. Reading

the same factoids on Wikipedia and watching the same viral video on YouTube, we experience a flattening of culture.

Cultural homogenization has graver consequences than the same hairstyles, catchphrases, action-hero antics and video clips propagated ad nauseam around the world. In all systems, homogenization is poison. Lack of diversity leads to inefficiency and failure. Infodiversity is as critical to our long-term survival ■ biodiversity. Both are bedrocks of human existence.

THE FRAGMENTATION OF OUR PSYCHES (JUMPY BRAIN SYNDROME)

At first all that information was pleasurable. It felt as if the sum of all knowledge was only a hyperlink away and we skipped joyously down the infotrail, sending emails to our friends, adding bookmarks and hopping from site to site late into the night. But ■ the initial glow wore off, we were left in a state of digital daze: unable to concentrate, feeling foggy, anxious and fatigued.

For many of us, what began as an exhilarating romp has become a daily compulsion. Our smart phones, netbooks and computers now keep us constantly online. While waiting in line at the supermarket or enjoying an evening walk or reading a book or even sitting at ■ concert, we keep texting our friends and receiving quick Twitter updates. We are drowning in an endless stream of connectivity. And future generations may be even more wired. A Pew Research Center study found that American teenagers send 50 or more text messages a day and one third send more than 100 ■ day. Another study by the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that American children between the ages of 8 and 18 spend an average of 7 ½ hours ■ day using some sort of electronic device.

Our online lives may now be impairing our ability to follow ■ sustained line of thought, to think

deeply about something and maybe even to reach "the heights of ecstasy and the depths of tragedy" in our creative lives. We may be suffering from the infodisease that Nicholas Carr first diagnosed in himself. "Over the past few years," he writes, "I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory... what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski."

RUNNING OUT OF CULTURE

In the race for economic expansion we depleted oil reserves, pulped ancient forests and pumped water until the wells ran dry. Now we're depleting the "old growth culture" - sucking dry the history, mythology, music, art and ideas that previous generations have bequeathed to us. All of our past is being picked over, recycled, remixed, regurgitated and repurposed.

Jaron Lanier, the father of "virtual reality," is perhaps the most respected and outspoken technologist to identify a troubling deficiency in our cultural health. In *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*, Lanier writes that our culture has become one of nostalgic remixing where authentic "first-order expression" is chopped up and mashed into a derivative piece of "second-order expression." And although Lanier shies away from proposing an infallible metric for distinguishing between the two, he does suggest that what distinguishes first-order expression is that it contributes something "genuinely new [to] the world" whereas derivative works recycle, repeat and fail to innovate.

The result is a society that treats our cultural

heritage as a resource for exploitation. Instead of producing new works of genuine art that replenish our mental environment, we celebrate the amateur whose mash-ups may be hilarious but contribute nothing of value to the cultural conversation. This situation becomes especially distressing when we consider that just as there is a finite amount of nutrients in our soil, there is a finite amount of creativity that the past can yield. Great art is rare, and only so many mash-ups can be released before the original power of a truly artistic creation is lost. And without the production of an authentic culture, our mental environment is in danger of becoming a clear-cut wasteland, over-farmed and depleted.

In Lanier's words, "we face a situation in which culture is effectively eating its own seed stock."

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT OF THE MIND

We are on the brink of a synergistic catastrophe. Financial, ecological and ethical collapse loom on the horizon even as the rate of mental illness continues to climb. The world has literally gone mad.

But as more people trace their anxieties, mood disorders and depressions back to the toxins in our mental world, the first murmurs of insurrection can be faintly heard. From blackspotted billboards to breakaway attempts-at-downshifting, to revolutionary provocations in failing states, we are witnessing the birth pangs of the quintessential uprising of the 21st century. What will come is a rewilding of our souls, a riot against the production of fake corporate and commercial meaning. What begins here today will be known as the environmental movement of the mind.

COMING IN
AUGUST #91



OLIVIER LABAN-MATTEI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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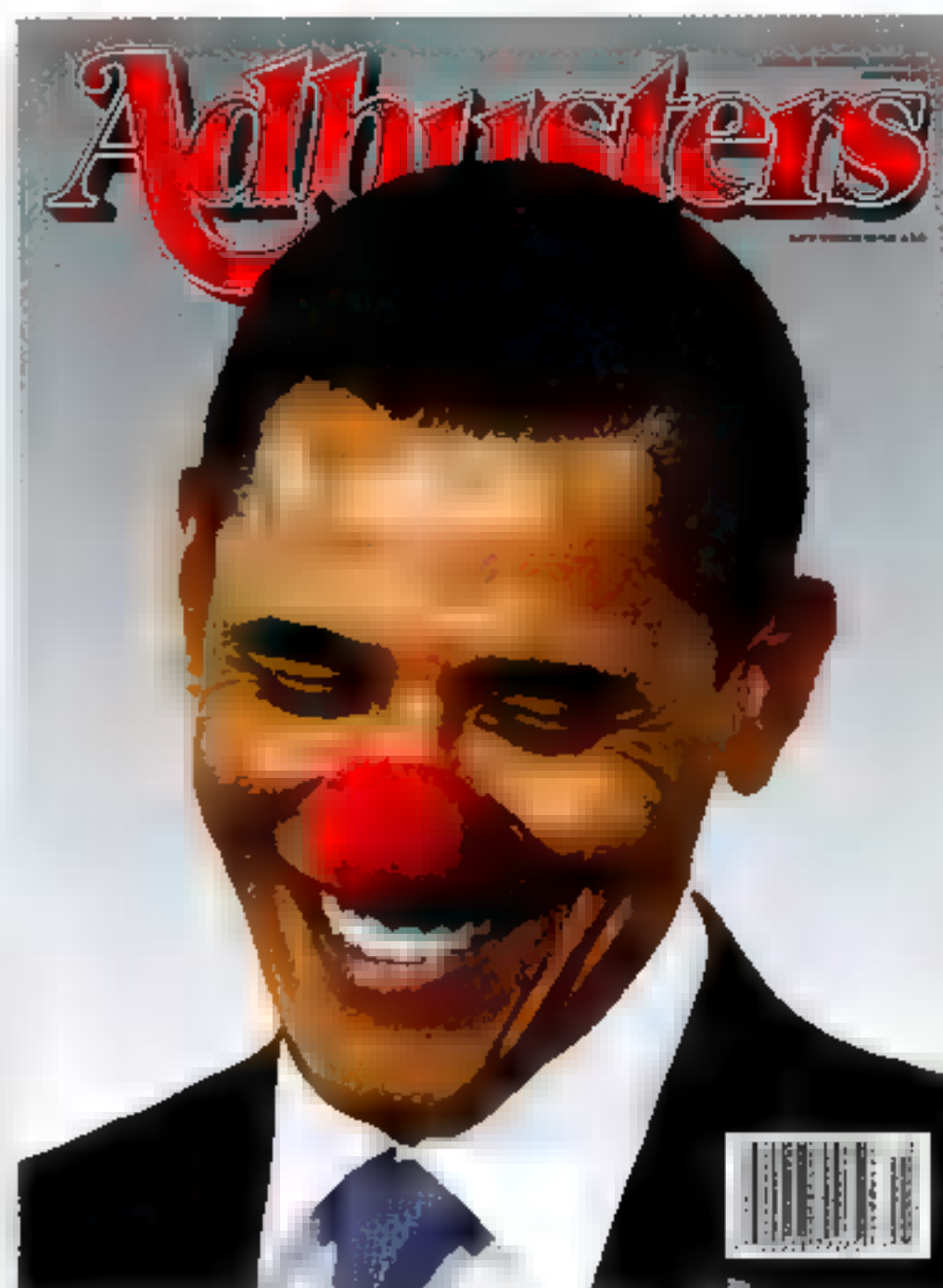
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Women could save the planet quite easily if they would simply stop having sex with men who drive big cars, earn big money or otherwise behave in ecologically unsound ways.

MATT RUDKIN

Dear Adbusters,
Michael Larson's, "We Are Living Through Postmillennial Tension" [Adbusters, #88] groped in vain for some foundation or liberating orientation in light of the demise of modernism and postmodernism. Somehow we [redacted] "to act without hope" in light of an "altermodern" world of disruption, rupture and precariousness. We cannot return to roots; we cannot believe in progress. But what is left? If there are [redacted] abiding standards for human conduct, [redacted] hope for human flourishing and no transcendent orientation to lead us on and keep [redacted] in check, we are left to Shakespeare's

"tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS, PH.D.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY,

DENVER SEMINARY

LITTLETON, CO

Michael Larson writes in The Post-Postmodern Issue [Adbusters, #88] that "the present moment offers us a clear picture of the divide between our dreams of progress and our own reality" and wonders whether we can still envision another future. But I believe that a possible way to cross this divide can be gleaned from his later statement that "the dominant ideal of modernity is tied to a notion of ever-expanding progress and limitless consumption." I highlight here the "dominant" part of his statement because there was at least one group of modernists for whom the notion of ever-expanding progress wasn't linked to



I enjoy creating images that echo back to a time when the world was a more relaxed place. There's something about capturing time that turns me on. Photography becomes a place where dream and reality can interact, a place where light and shadow rule. Seizing the moment and preserving it on film gives me great pleasure.

RANDALL GETTY

limitless consumption, and that was the early worker's movement, whose theoreticians included Ricardo and Marx. For them ever-expanding progress meant the ever-increasing ability of technology to automate production and thereby abolish work, and with it the logic of capital and commodity relations. The world that they foresaw, in which "disposable time" became the **essence** of true wealth (and during which, as Marx famously wrote, one might fish by day and write criticism by night), is a very different vision from the limitless consumption that **defines** to define the modernist project.

What makes **this** more than

just a historical footnote is that increasingly the technology to truly liberate us from work is all around us and in use. In the telecommunications sector, for example, nearly half the jobs **have been** automated out of existence in the twenty years after the breakup of the original AT&T. True to our current economic rationality, this meant that half of the original workforce simply lost their jobs while the other half continued to work full-time. But **if** we imagine, in place of this scenario, that the **same** number of workers continued to work as before but only half **as** many hours, we can see the revolutionary potential of automation that

the early worker's movement had foreseen; we can also see that it might be a key element in allowing us to find **a** concrete agenda "without a return to the genocidal modernist project" that Micah White describes in another article in the issue and in allowing us to "forge a new path that gathers its strength from the difference between spiritual wealth and material greed."

But, **like** the recently deceased French writer André Gorz details in *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*, instead of less work for all, the ruling technocracy would rather that **we** maintain a 40-hour work week



Amy Guldry
Special Ingredients

as both the norm and the ideal. The reasons aren't hard to fathom: those who have full-time jobs are too busy working to do anything in their off-hours except buy the products they are intended to consume while the large numbers of un- and "under-" employed workers are perennially on the defensive, fearful of economic ruin and forced to pursue the endless re-training and career counseling services offered to them, often training them in skills or for occupations that will already be obsolete by the time they complete the course.

I would argue that the crisis of

rationality that the postmodernists discussed in the issue believe ■ are suffering under is not a crisis of rationality itself but a crisis of the rationality of industrial capitalism, whose logic we remain trapped in ■ matter how absurd it might now be (hence the sanctity, on the Left as well as the Right, of the 40-hour work week or of the way people believe that absurd parts of the service "industry," such as tanning salons, deliver a "product," or create wealth). Gorz states it well when he writes that "we are living through the disintegration of a whole social system, a system which threatens to survive

its ■ death by entombing us for decades in its own lifeless structures ... dragging us toward a living-dead capitalism where the means of social production and social control can no longer be distinguished," and in which "a normalizing technocracy continues to glorify an already extinct order in the name of values which have long lost all meaning."

G.S. EVANS
TUCSON, AZ

I began reading *Adbusters* at the beginning of the year. I began with The Big Ideas of 2010 [*Adbusters*, #87] and I have picked up ■ issue at a newsstand every so often ever since. I noticed from the beginning, however, that *Adbusters* carries ■ lot of anti-Israel articles and recurring themes. I am not Jewish myself, but I still found it to be quite disturbing. Israel is the most progressive and democratic state in the Middle East on all fronts. This constant bashing of Israel and the Gaza/"Palestinian freedom suppression" debacle needs to be toned down. Israel is not interested in destroying the dignity of any peoples or cultures.

I was working in Israel before, during, and after Operation Cast Lead though I am no longer there. This engagement was a response to years of unreciprocated bombings of legal Israeli towns and settlements (within the undisputed state of Israel) by Gazans from across the border (the people of these towns were forced to flee to bomb shelters every day of their lives for years without any retaliation by Israel). When action was finally taken, extreme care was devoted to NOT harm civilians in



Photographer James Reynolds has created the Far Foods series to highlight how far some foods travel and how much carbon dioxide they emit to reach our mouths. The alternative packaging for supermarket produce includes labels that tear-off like a boarding pass, and containing information like this:

These oranges have traveled 6,258 miles by plane and truck, and emitted 5.1 kilos (11.22 pounds) of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

any way and to contain the fighting within Gaza. It took weeks to engage ground troops because Israel did not want to harm civilians. Unfortunately, the Gazan fighters fired bombs and other weapons from hospitals, schools and UN buildings, resulting in casualties on both sides. Israel is criticized for firing on these buildings (only after searches and other measures were taken to try and evacuate civilians), but the Gazans ■■■ not criticized for rigging hospitals and

schools to explode ■■ for hiding within them and using them as firing points. The blockades are not good things; everyone can agree on that, but measures such as these become necessary when the enemy is indistinguishable from the civilian and when enemies ■■■ civilians as mules and ■■ shields.

If only terrorist organizations could be held accountable for war crimes then maybe "the world may ■■■ know the truth."

AJC CRIMMINS

Dear Adbusters,

The UK has expelled Mossad's chief London agent for "intolerable" use of British passports in the recent Dubai assassination and a "profound disregard" for the UK and its sovereignty.

Of course the racist Zionist-run, nuclear terrorist, genocidal, war criminal, rogue state of Apartheid Israel has "profound disregard" for the sovereignty of many other countries, e.g., (1) Ireland, France, Germany, New Zealand

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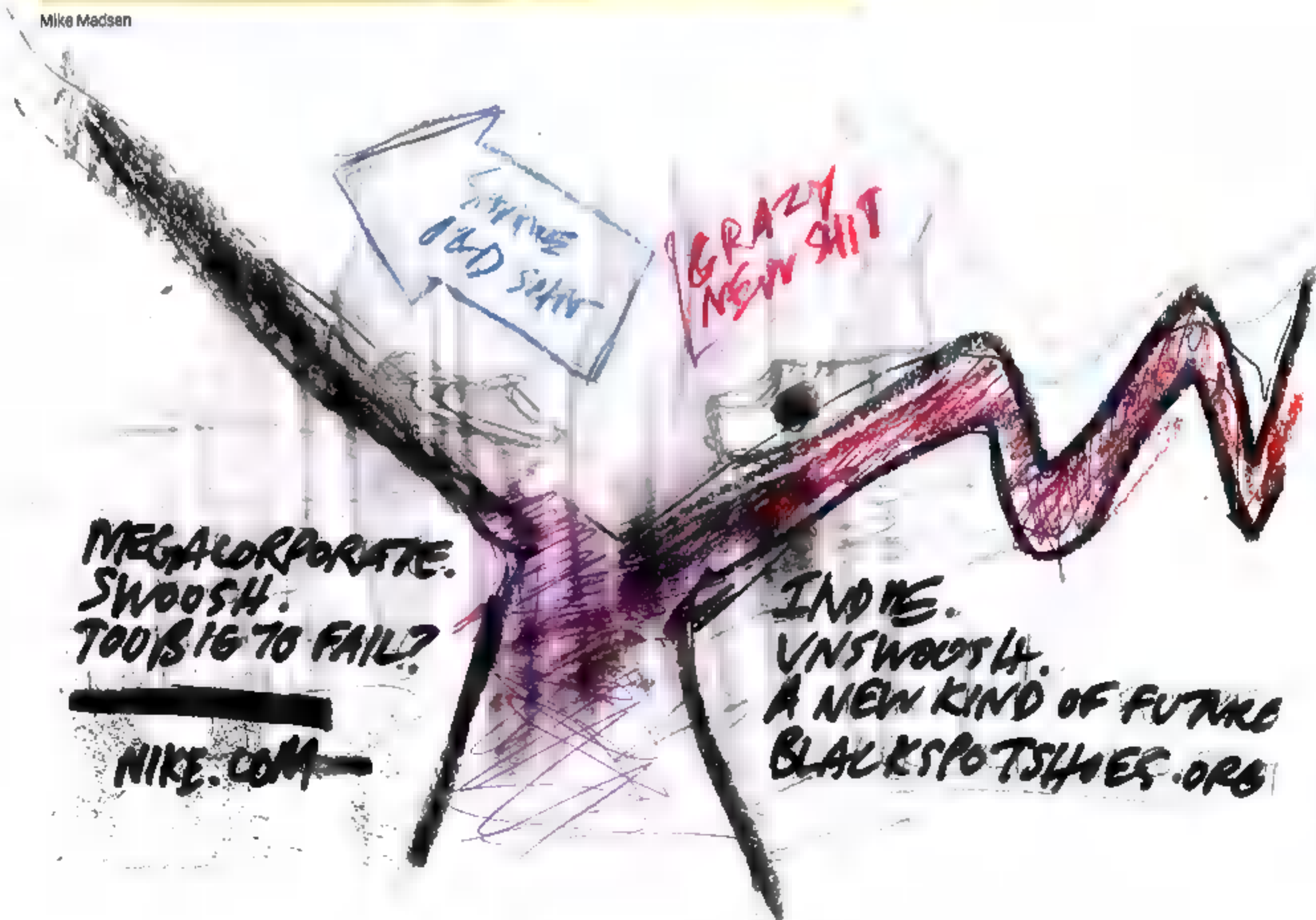


Mike Madsen

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and Australia (whose passports it forged for terrorist purposes, doing so with Australia's on a "regular" basis); (2) Arab countries whose territory it continues to illegally occupy (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria); (3) countries it has attacked and militarily occupied in the past (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon); (4) countries against which it has perpetrated genocide (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan); (5) countries it has attacked militarily (Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Uganda, USA); and (6) countries whose sovereignty it threatens to violate at times of its own choosing (Iran).

DR. GIDEON POLYA
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Hi Adbusters.

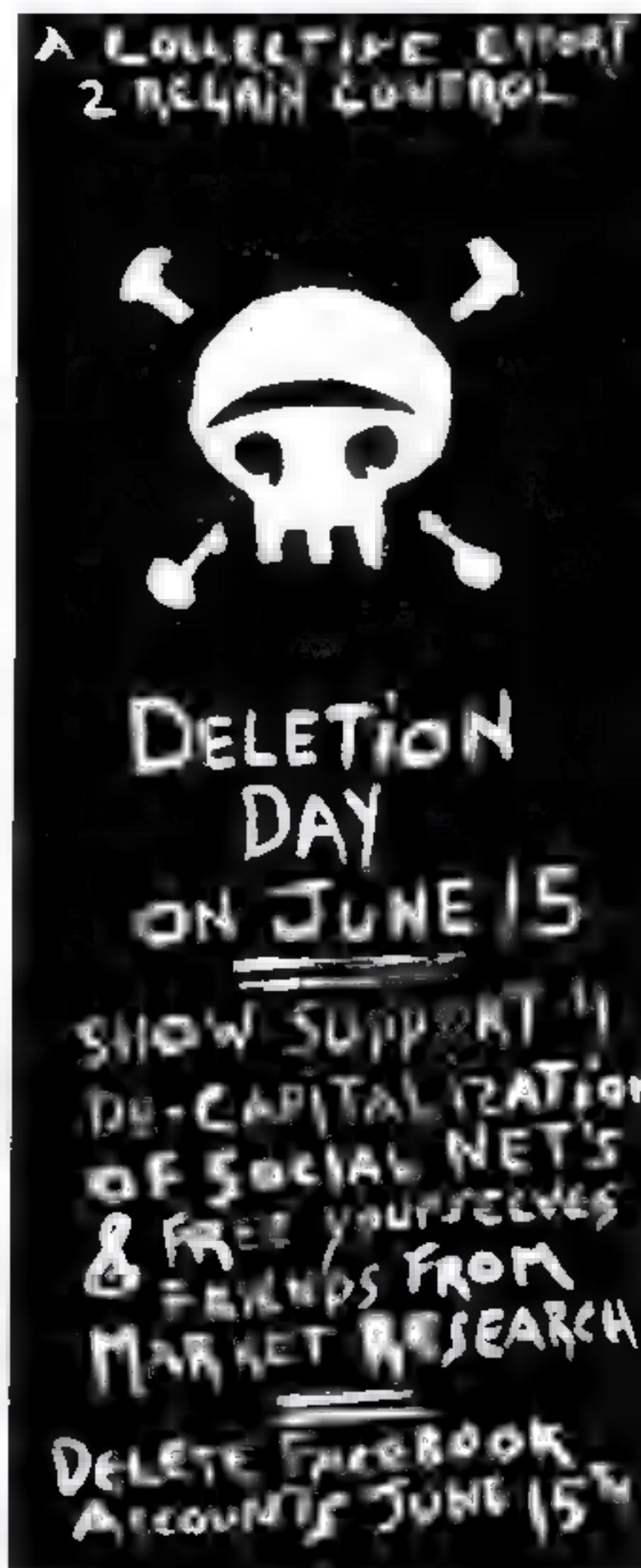
I have been studying the work of Jean Baudrillard and his ideas of hyperreality and simulation.

The reality of our culture of simulation is a constant in our lives – it's the small things that usually the most startling. An example of this happened in my office today.

It was the editor's birthday. We had the perfunctory 11 o'clock birthday cake, but we did not sing "Happy Birthday."

Instead, the sub-editor played a YouTube video of people singing "Happy Birthday." It represented to me so many things that exemplify our culture: the

outsourcing of effort, the simulated being of higher value than the real, the notion that anything can be turned into a reference, a parody, a simulation.



I turned and left the room of the postmodern birthday.

Cheers,

MONIQUE MILLER
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Dear Adbusters Comrades,
First of all, thank you to keep me thinking since I became a subscriber (I think I became completely addicted since looking at your front page.)

Congratulations for both The Post-Postmodern Issue [Adbusters, #88] and The Ecopsychology Issue [Adbusters, #89], they have generated a lot of conversations around both how we see and live nature and how dependent we are to technology.

Now, regarding the Digital Detox week ... I consider that it was great but was also weird for me. I had funny things that went down. I forgot my Blackberry at home during Tuesday of that week and felt like it was no tomorrow, but I was wrong! I survived with no harm! I felt so free after that I told to me how you didn't manage to rest from that "soul sucker" (as a close friend calls that devilish but quite addictive device).

I read a lot, both your Ecopsychology Issue [Adbusters, #89] but also finished a couple of books. Becoming more aware, I felt less depressed too. I reconsidered my Geekness level and I got in touch with my closest acquaintances, going out and discussing both

those circumstances and important non-small-talking and transcendent issues. I continued an awareness-activism committee at my college ... And since both laptops at home crashed (bad, but good at last), I had no turning



To the editors of Adbusters:

The 1884 painting *Bathers at Asnières* by Georges Seurat which appeared in your issue #88 recalled a scene my wife and I saw some years ago while traveling in Taiwan. Kenting, at the southern tip of Taiwan, is described in the official Kenting National Park website:

Dazzling bright sunshine, azure blue seawater, clean shining sand beach ... This is Taiwan's first national park – Kenting, renowned for its rich landscape of hills and water, abundant life, and natural resources for everyone's enjoyment.

What they fail to mention is that holiday-makers share the beach with NNP3, Taiwan's third nuclear power plant. That nuclear plants have been built on one of the most seismically active places in the world seems a folly. The attached photo is a jaw dropper if Seurat's bathers seemed strangely oblivious of the smog.

Keep up the great work!

MIKE CHIN
VANCOUVER

back. Now I know what to do when I push the power button on my laptop: use it and surf thoughtfully. I am quite impressed and grateful how a week can change our whole perception of reality.

Cheers to all, both readers and the awesome Adbusters crew, my full respect.

HORACIO LÓPEZ MILLE
MEXICO CITY, MX

Hey Adbusters,
A few days have passed since I started my Digi Detox Week. Honestly, I'm not doing too well. I constantly want to find a computer and get it without anyone knowing, but my mother has passwords on all the computers in the house. I feel pathetic because of my addiction to technology. I crave it. I hate that I want it so badly. I didn't even realize how

intensely I adored it until it was gone. It's my crutch. It helps me get away from the real world, real people and real responsibilities. Reality scares me, so I run. I'm not a bad friend in reality. I'm just different, and most people don't understand it. Everyone loves my computer self and I love my computer for making me loved. Even if it's not real.

It's been seven days since my

digital detox ended. I discovered a lot about myself and the way I feel/live while not having a computer. To my surprise, I'm in a better mood when I'm not on the computer. I focus more. I spend more time with my family and truly pay attention to them. I help my ■■■■■ cook and play with my cats. I get more school work done and just feel all-around better. Cleaner. Happier. I can see now that I had an unhealthy relationship with the internet. I created a separate being: my online self. I was living a double life. I don't want to do that anymore. I want to be Abby. Just Abby. Not "MySpace Abby" or "Facebook Abby" or anything else that isn't the real me.

ABBY PERRY, 16 YEARS OLD

MY DIGITAL DETOX

Day One

I feel anxious.

My daughter and I trade our regular morning routine - coffee and cartoons - for breakfast and Play-Doh™. I keep resisting the constant urge to turn on the TV or the computer. At 10:30am, coffee in hand, I break down. I fire up Facebook and declare myself in digital rehab for the next week. I hope it gives me closure. Now what?

My daughter and I water the plants on the balcony. She is very excited by what we discover: the peppers are sprouting!

At a local coffee shop I resist the temptation to iPod myself away from the world and end up enjoying a warm cup

of conversation with a friend I haven't seen in months.

At dinner time my wife and I notice that our daughter's high chair is still facing the TV. We re-orient her to face toward us, and the three of us giggle the rest of the way through dinner. As bedtime approaches, mommy watches "Dancing with the Stars" on mute.

Day Two

Without any late-night MMORPG sessions, I fell asleep three hours earlier than usual. I wake up refreshed. No DVD means no Yoga, so I do sit-ups and push-ups for half an hour instead. My upper back hurts, but I am calm and comfortable when I leave the house.

Lunch time: I've begun to feel fidgety ... coffee doesn't help.

[détournement]



b a b y
CRAP

The greasy burger I order actually looks like the one in the picture. I think this scares me more than when it doesn't resemble the picture at all. Bacon shouldn't be that color.

After lunch I cruise the mall looking for a gift. The hand-cream sales-girl is very pretty and leaves me zero personal space. She holds my hands and face like we're old lovers reunited. It's an impressive sales technique.

Day Three

"C'mon Daddy, W'kup!" Fruit salad and drip coffee. We play with farm animals instead of watching them. I haven't clenched my teeth since this time yesterday.

At work my colleagues let me turn off the radio, but my lunch-time detox is more difficult: 52 inches of infotainment is hard to ignore.

At home, my wife is immersed in Facebook and Top Model. I'm clenching my teeth again.

Day Four

My cell phone can no longer be avoided. I make three calls to plan my day. There are 25 people on the bus ... only four of us are not anchored to a digital device. The girl next to me is pretty. She uses her camera phone as a mirror while she applies her lipstick.

Day Five

I feel lonely. My daughter has abandoned me on my quest for digital abstinence. She is not about to let me turn off Handy Manny®. At work, they let me turn off the radio, but my wife keeps texting me. I don't reply.

Day Six

I wake and make Coffee. My daughter is watching TV ... I join in the game she is playing: "I Spy" with her TV friend, Emily Osment. At work they won't let me turn off the radio. My jaw is clenched tight.

Day Seven

I wake up naturally, without an alarm.

At work they turn the radio back on as soon as I leave the room.

On my walk home I see a mom crying in a parking lot, pleading with her kid to stop texting. He just ignores her. I find myself suddenly angry. I want to crawl into the car, wrench the phone from him and pitch it into the street.

When I arrive home my daughter greets me: "Home? Daddy home?" She is sitting, basking in the glow of the TV. My attempt at digital detox has ended. I'm done. I can't do this alone. Next year, if I try again, I won't do it without a group to share the experience with. Non-toxic life too lonely.

SKWIRLY

Dear Editors,

Last night I witnessed the 2010 Urban Word citywide championship in Harlem. Twenty-four teen-aged slam poets performed and emitted thousands of invisible bursts of raw, real and uncensored emotion. While this was incredibly inspiring, I started to feel a little nervous and upset about halfway through the program. After mulling it over for a while, I realized I was enraged at how foreign this beautiful art was to me. After many years of getting excellent grades in the system, I guess I was pretty confident in my intellect and maturity. Nothing in my 10+ years in the dead, scripted and tamed public and private schooling system seemed to make me feel as alive and educated as did these 3 hours of truth, I'll call it. Even though I'm still in the system and receiving stellar grades in difficult classes, the system has failed me. It has not helped me be happier or more in touch with myself, but it has succeeded in alienating me from other cultures and a sense of a connected world. I hope I'm not too trapped in the binding system and could be like a poet who ended: "Poets like me never gave a fuck about school." Adbusters, this is a new beginning for me. Thanks for all your help.

JULIA SMITH



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- Interactive DVD
- Spoof Ads
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Why don't we put this company out of business?



In 1996 Pfizer carried out unlicensed medical trials of its drug Trovan on critically ill children in a Nigerian slum, leaving 11 dead and many more plagued by serious long-term side effects. Trovan was banned and Pfizer eventually paid a \$75 million settlement. Pfizer was forced to pay \$430 million in 2004 for illegally marketing the drug Neurontin for unapproved uses. Despite pledging to obey the law, Pfizer was levied a \$2.3 billion fine in 2009 for once again recommending its drugs for potentially dangerous uses. The largest criminal fine in history, it amounted to less than

three weeks of the pharmaceutical giant's sales, and business continues as usual.

Why should Pfizer be too big to fail? From Philip Morris to Goldman Sachs to Exxon Mobil, corporations that break the public trust must be held criminally responsible for their actions. Send ■■ email to Attorney General Holder asking him to adopt ■ three strikes rule against corporate criminals. Break the public trust three times and you're out: We'll revoke your corporate charter and put you out of business. No exceptions.

Dear Adbusters,
With a kind smile, I'm writing to share with you why I have canceled my subscription to *Adbusters* after following the magazine since near its conception in Canada many years ago.

Simply I feel like I've reached a saturation point with ■ old approach that favors cynicism, criticism and separation, for it offers no viable alternative to the existing woes of dominant corporate culture. Subversive dissidence need not be negatively focused, for that simply perpetuates a cycle of negativity that isn't necessarily better than the model it would replace. (A world history of armed revolutions, resulting in similarly oppressive situations, has taught that lesson.)

It's not enough to criticize anymore. It is exhausting, disheartening and counterproductive. Reactionary isn't necessarily visionary, and in its recent manifestations of culture jamming, *Adbusters* has presented or rallied around very few true solutions for fostering people's happiness. For therein lies the real revolution, right? To claim the right to be happy and free?

Perhaps it's a symptom of feeling too long in the trenches, which is understandable for individuals in the context of a global

campaign. But as ■ media agency offering an alternative voice and leadership, the medium and message and all that bit, how you communicate your meaning is essential to the meaning itself, as you know. So why not inspire hope?

Failure
to learn new things
kills neurons. People who vegetate before the TV are killing their neurons. People who never do anything new or meet anyone new are killing their neurons. People who never read or learn a new game or build ■ model airplane or cook up a ■ recipe or learn a new language are killing their neurons. Mind you, many middle-aged professionals are killing their neurons. They're doing what they are good at, what they already know, what they learned to do years ago. They're pursuing careers, raising children, cooking dinner, returning phone calls, reading the newspaper. They are busy and accomplished, but they are not learning anything new. If you are not learning anything new, you are killing your neurons. To keep your neurons, learn something ■ every day. Begin now. Doing so requires no particular genius.

PRISCILLA LONG

Love is ■ essential ingredient to bring about the quality of change that is desired. Or else face further disempowerment for lacking what gives life meaning and joy.

Truly, I wish you well.

RIO (TAYLOR JUDSON)

Hey guys,
I thought you might be interested in a class project I'm doing right now.

On Tuesday, May 11th, myself and some friends will cover all advertising and publicity outlets on campus with white paper that says "Nothing" on it, and we'll put up posters that pose questions and provide the critical tools necessary to think about advertising. I want people to think about the pervasiveness and significance of ads and publicity. There is ■ website that allows for anonymous discourse and an article in the campus newspaper that will release same day to help explain what's happening. It's a guerilla ad campaign about ad campaigns, and it's called the Campaign for Nothing.

Peace & good luck,

BROOKS

HASSIG

BELLINGHAM,
WASHINGTON

Hello Adbusters,
My ■ is Marcelo,
Brazilian, living in Chile.

I am a communications professor in a couple of universities here and ■ new "friend of the foundation" even though I had already been a fan for a year or so – right from the day I discovered you guys on the web.

I have an issue that I have not seen discussed as deeply as I believe it should be by *Adbusters*, and that I truly believe is aligned with the cause: children and advertising.

I see many ways to deal with the issue, and that's why I feel it could make ■ good theme:

- Effects of consumerism on the health (mental, physical, spiritual) of children
- Hypervulnerability of children when exposed to propaganda – that may be very well justified by doctors, scientists, psychologists and others, even advertisers, why not?
- Testimonials of parents that had trouble with that issue (got in debt for giving an X-Box or something)
- It is impossible not to mention the Nintendo 64 kid; I think your creative guys could do a lot with this YouTube hit, subverted in a BMW commercial (let's bring out the child in you, that consumerist child that needs nothing but stuff, expensive exclusive fun stuff to be happy!!!)
- Legal issues: children's rights, universal declaration, different approaches in different countries (for example, there are a few countries that do not allow advertisements during children's programming, others

don't allow the use of cartoons in advertisements AT ALL, etc.)

- Who is fighting against childhood consumption (I could try to map Latin American institutions and make contacts for you); in this aspect, who has lawsuits or experiences combating this kind of unethical marketing – like gifts for kids with products (McDonald's is always the reference on that)
- **THE MAIN POINT:** Are we raising citizens or consumers? How are we intending to fulfill a child's existence? What are our expectations for his or her behavior when grown up?

Best regards from beautiful Chilean autumn.

MARCELO SANTOS

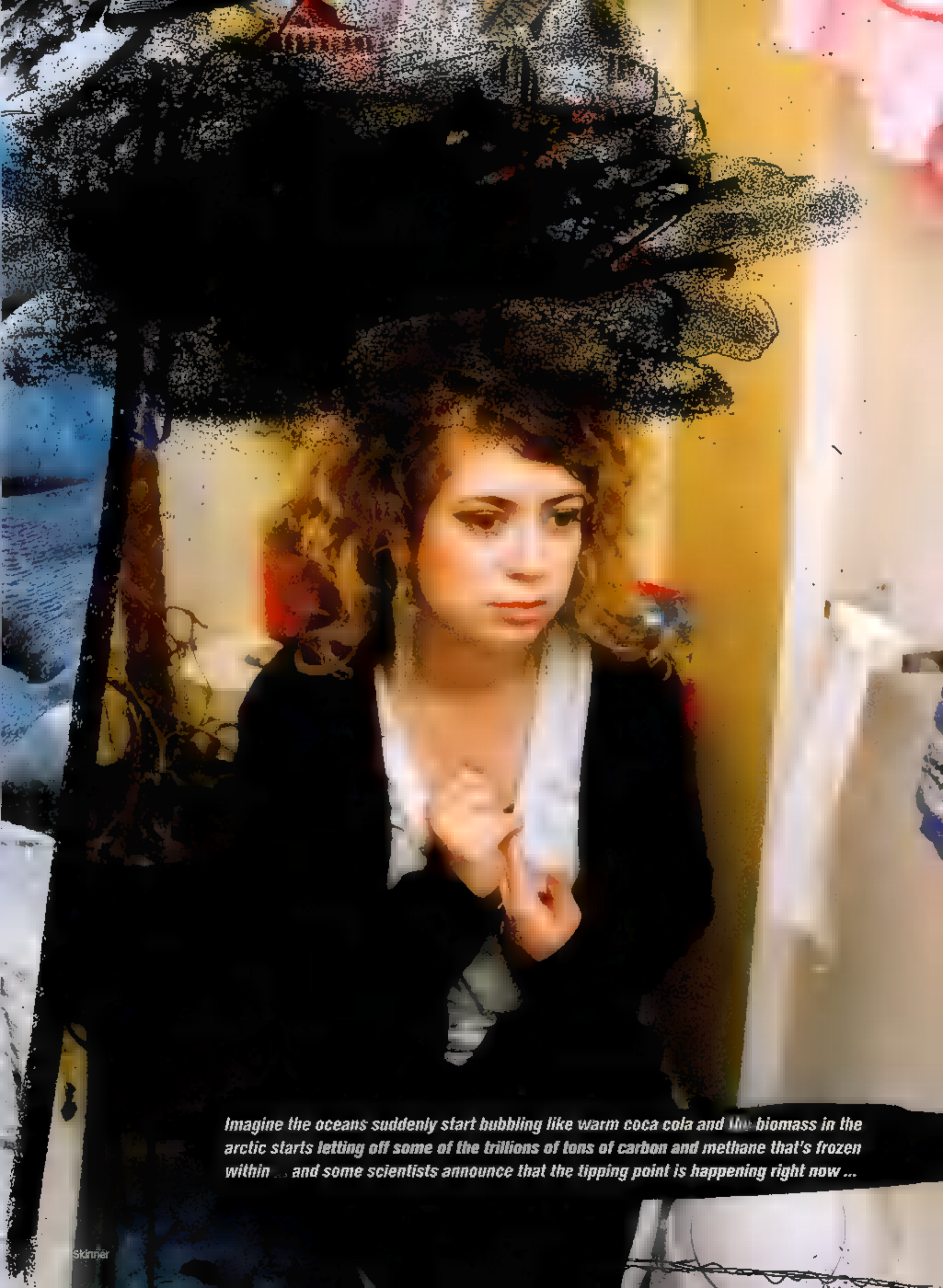
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Imagine the oceans suddenly start bubbling like warm coca cola and the biomass in the arctic starts letting off some of the trillions of tons of carbon and methane that's frozen within ... and some scientists announce that the tipping point is happening right now ...

narcissism is the

Society has been discussing the negative effects of advertising for decades. But now, suddenly a real backlash is occurring with concrete changes emerging in countries around the world.

Sao Paulo enacted a near-complete ban on outdoor advertising in 2007 and Spain recently passed a new law restricting advertisements that promote the "cult of the body," including slimming products, surgical procedures and beauty treatments. Restrictions on cigarette and alcohol advertising have marked significant victories in many countries, as have limits on advertising on children's TV shows.

Now a report by the UK think tank Compass entitled "The Advertising Effect" is a bold call to further action.

Compass urges radical new policies to restrict and control advertising, an industry whose goal they say is, "the creation of a mood of restless dissatisfaction with what we have got and who we are so that we go out and buy more."

The Compass plan of attack includes new taxes on advertisers and a complete ban on advertising in public places, all alcohol advertising and viral marketing. But it is their insistence that we outlaw advertising to children under 12 years old that is truly revolutionary.

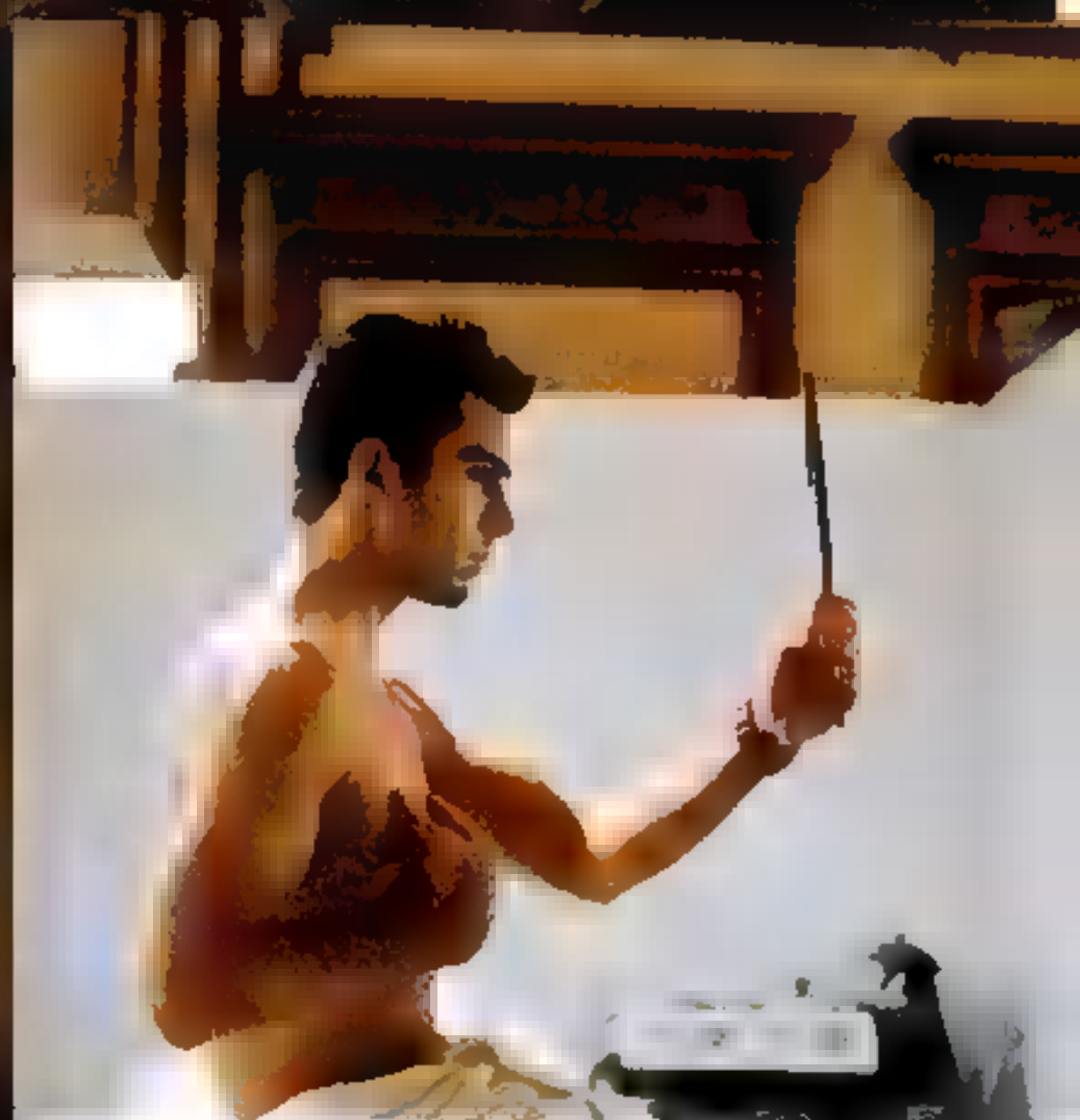
Warning of the role advertising plays in family breakdown, teenage alienation and premature sexualization, Compass insists, "Children should be protected until their minds are able to cope with complex selling techniques – they should be free to be children not just consumers."

It will be the next generations who will ultimately decide whether to proceed with our hyperconsumptive way of life or embrace a sustainable standard of living. We must take all necessary steps to prevent their indoctrination and counter the effects of advertising.

The strength and scope of the trillion dollar a year advertising industry is frightening, but as awareness grows and tangible changes are seen, there is hope that its pervasive influence on our lives can be scaled back in the future.



Fast food of the soul



LOVE ■

People worldwide experience pressure to conform to specific, often commercially created ideals of beauty. Christopher, 22, examines his chest after a waxing treatment to remove hair in a New York beauty salon. Photo by Zed Nelson

LOUIS VUITTON



JIM WILSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDOUX

infoparasite

Google has executed ■ information coup d'état. From its early days ■ ■ noncommercial search engine powered by geeky idealists, it has become the primary force in commercializing our culture. No bit of online content escapes Google's grasp without first being turned into fodder for advertising. Whether it is our emails, our videos or our blogs and books, access is granted only if we accept the presence of targeted advertising. Google has become the commercialized frame through which our culture is accessed, and it is therefore the first advertising company to achieve the status of the cultural paratext.

For literary theorists, the paratext is contrasted with the hypotext. While the latter refers to the content of the author's words, the paratext is everything that surrounds those pages: the cover, the copyright notice, the editor's introduction, the author's bio – all these make up the content that complements the hypotext. The paratext is a part of the overall text, but it plays ■ unique role in framing the work. When we speak of not judging a book by its cover, for example, we are acknowledging the overwhelming power that the paratext has in influencing our interpretation of the original source material. Understanding the force of the paratext pushes us to consider the consequences for our culture if everything online is surrounded in a frame of advertising.

This is why quibbles over the relevance and usefulness of Google's ads, or whether they are distracting, miss the fundamental point. If advertising becomes the frame of our culture, then all thought is constrained by its horizon. The forces of commercialization need not counter the messages of anti-consumerism if they are able to play the role of the paratext. Simply running advertisements alongside attacks

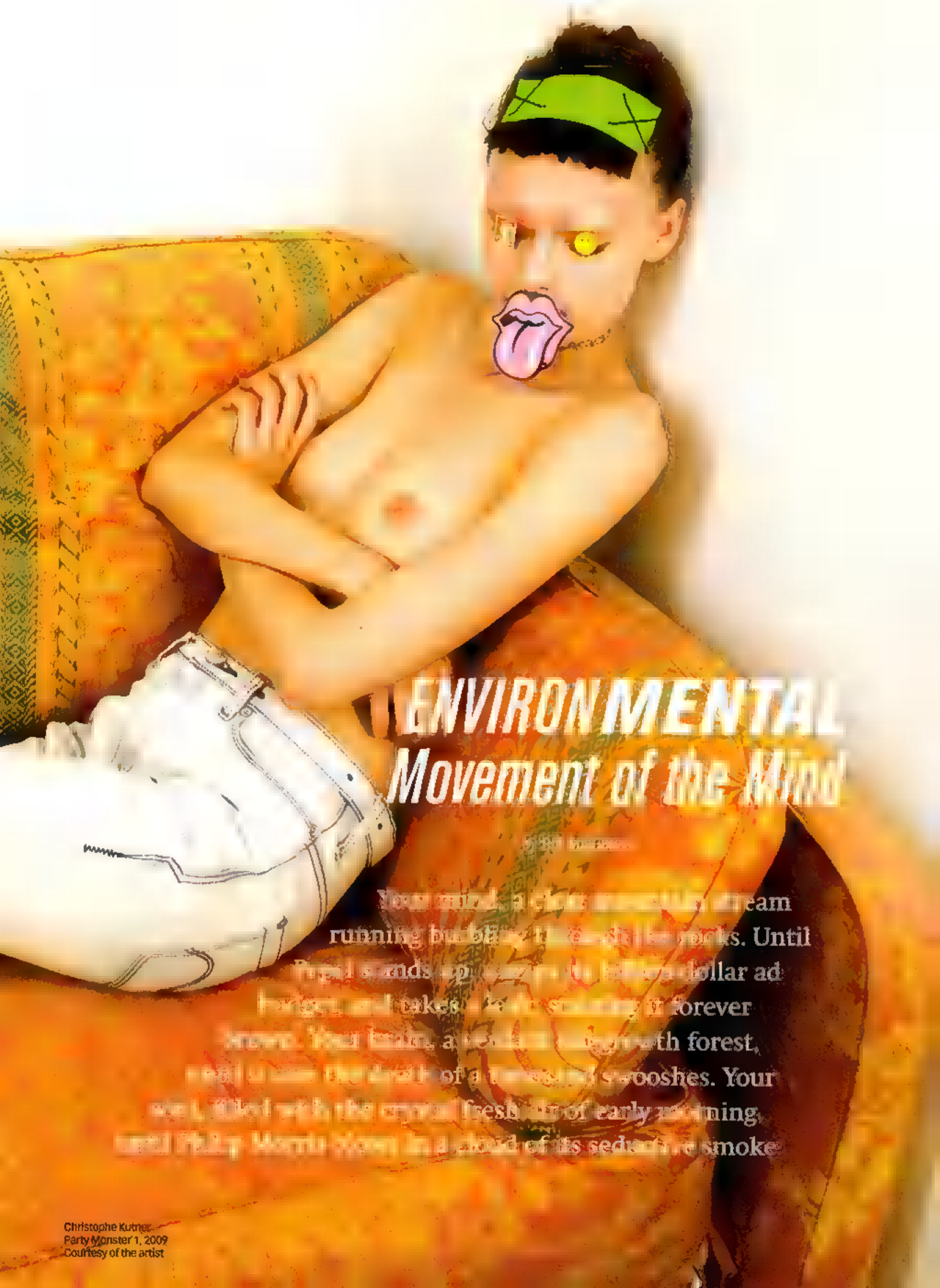
on commercialized culture neutralizes that resistance. All of a sudden it seems unreasonable, impossible or old-fashioned to dream outside Google's ad-frame.

Google is happy to remain an infoparasite, an organization attaching advertising to the creative products of our minds, because there has been little resistance. Unlike traditional advertisers whose interjection of 30-second spots into the hypotext of culture-alienated viewers, Google promotes the illusion that it doesn't change the content: It only provides access. But whether ■ is rewriting the hypotext or replacing the paratext, the overall effect is the same: Authentic culture, our only hope of escaping consumerism, is appropriated and commercialized.

Today's culture jammers face a formidable challenge. It takes courage to become the early pioneers of the backlash against Google: To be the first to refuse to have our words become hypotext for the advertising frame. That means turning our back on this search engine-turned-info-highwayman by simultaneously undermining its image of omniscience while we hurt its bottom line.

Remove your writings, your images, yourself from Google. Make it known that our cultural productions are not available for commercial exploitation. And while we challenge the assumption that Google is all knowing, let us hit advertisers where it hurts: by clicking on all the ads. With each click we will cost the advertisers money while spreading the most powerful idea of all: that the paratext of ads is about to be ruptured by a movement of jammers taking back their culture.

Micah White



ENVIRONMENTAL *Movement of the Mind*

Your mind, a clear mountain stream
running bubbling over smooth rocks. Until
Pipal stands up, a pop, a billion-dollar ad
burger, and takes the stream away forever
know. Your brain, a lush green forest,
until a tree the death of a thousand swooshes. Your
soul, filled with the crisp freshness of early morning,
until Philip Morris blows in a cloud of its seductive smoke

No. Mental environmentalism may be the most important notion of this new century, but the only way to start this discussion is by admitting the analogy is not exact. Whatever the mental environment is, it's not a pristine wilderness untrammelled by people. It's not the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or the Antarctic biosphere. No, the mental environment has been shaped by culture as long ■ we've been, well, human.

The mind is, among other things, ■ tool for collecting, storing, weighing images and ideas. Perhaps earlier in our primate evolution our brains worked differently, but for millions of years we have been shaping our own minds and the minds of those around us. Our mental environment is not the Yosemite of John Muir or Ansel Adams. It has always been more like Central Park, a landscaped reflection of human notions. Every generation, every community, has had a mental environment. The culture. The zeitgeist. It is that almost invisible fog of assumptions in which we live our lives, the set of images and ideas we barely notice because they are so common as to be both banal and overwhelming.

What's more, this is not the first moment that our mental environment has been polluted. We've seen all kinds of toxins poured into the infostream. Check out a Leni Riefenstahl movie if you want to see what I mean. Try to imagine life during Mao's Cultural Revolution. The state, the church have time and again become mentally oppressive until eventually a resistance emerged – a resistance that, from Martin Luther to Vaclav Havel, said at least in part: "We want ■ minds back." Not all the way back: We've never owned our minds entirely. But more of our minds, in better shape.

Which brings us to the present moment, the moment that ■ have to deal with, the moment out of which we have to stage our singular resistance. The mental environment is under siege from a particularly difficult variety of pollution. To understand it, consider

■ analogy from the physical world, where carbon dioxide is threatening to warm the planet disastrously. Taken in small doses, carbon dioxide is not dangerous, just as the occasional commercial or billboard is hardly a problem. In fact, CO2 in small quantities isn't anywhere near as dangerous as most chemicals, just as Ronald McDonald couldn't do the same kind of damage as, say, Joseph Goebbels. But every act of a modern life releases carbon into the atmosphere. Spewed from the rear ends of a billion cars and factories and furnaces, this constant pollution now seems likely to raise global temperatures five degrees in this century, altering everything from rainfall to ice-melt to wind speed. Similarly, the modern consumer economy sends up an almost infinite blitz of information and enticement, till the air is so thick with it that every feature of our society is changed. In neither ■ is it pollution in the usual sense, easily cleaned with a smokestack filter or combated with a more wholesome image. Instead, it's a volume problem. In the case of the so-called information society, it may be the largest psychological experiment in history.

Here's another way of saying it: We are the first few generations to receive most of our sense of the world mediated rather than direct, to have it arrive through one screen or another instead of from contact with other human beings or with nature.

If the mental environment we live in has ■ single distinctive feature, the way that oxygen defines our atmosphere, it is self-absorption. That's what a mental environment gone awry has produced; that is the toxic outcome of our era's unique pollution. Some years ago, working on a book, I watched every word and image that came across the largest cable system in the world in a 24-hour period – more than 2,000 hours of ads and infomercials, music videos and sitcoms. If you boiled this stew down to its basic ingredient, this is what you found, repeated ad infinitum: You are the most

important thing on Earth, the heaviest object in the universe. From the fawning flattery of the programming to the mind-messing nastiness of the commercials, it continually posited ■ world of extreme individualism. Even more than, say, violence, that's the message that flows out the coaxial cable. Characters on television may turn violent to get what they want now, but it's the what-they-want-now that lies nearer the heart of the problem.

This hyperindividualism is a relatively ■ phenomenon in our lives. For most of human history, people have put something else near the center – the tribe, the gods, the natural world. But ■ consumer society can't tolerate that, because having something else at the center complicates consumption.

This appeal to us ■ individual fragments grows ever more powerful and precise. Most of the new technologies premise their appeal (especially to advertisers) on their ability to target with frightening accuracy our locations and our psyches.

So far, the assaults on our mental environment have been mainly from the outside, but we are seeing sorties on the inside too. Already we see psychopharmacology rampant, the ranks of people who need such medicine swelled by a creeping malaise: a gradual redefinition of our foibles, of ■ tiny personal tragedies. There are pills for the camera-shy, for "shopper's remorse," for the stresses of personal bankruptcy – it's getting crowded in the collective bummer tent. Before long, genetic engineers may well be able to literally tweak the brains of our children, offering them "extra intelligence" or perhaps docility, upgraded memory at the price of downgraded meaning. Improved individuals, at the price of whatever individuality should mean in its sweetest sense.

But. The human mind and heart are not dead yet; indeed there are signs that we've reached the moment of resistance, that ■ million Vaclav Havels, albeit often tongue-tied

and unsure precisely of their mission, are rising from different corners to challenge this assault. If you ask me what I remember from the WTO battle in Seattle, it is not the sting of rubber bullets or the choke of gas; it is a jaunty balloon rising above the melee with this message painted on its side: "Wake Up Muggles." If you've read Harry Potter, then you know: Muggles are all of us, living in a world of magic but unable to see it, focused as we are on television and mall. But we are waking, in sufficient numbers to ensure there will be the same kind of fight for the mental environment ■ there has been for the physical one. And, of course, the fights will overlap.

Mental environmentalists may well lose, just like their colleagues working in the physical world. Global warming may be too much to overcome, and so may genetic engineering or push media or the simple warm-bath skill of those designers and marketers who would sap our lives for their own advancement. But the fight itself holds tremendous possibility. The liberation from self-absorption comes most of all in the battle to help others and in the vision of a world that makes sense to our minds, a world where no single idea ("buy") holds sway.

Forget monoculture, in our fields or in our heads; imagine instead a thousand different communities, adapted to the physical places they inhabit, sharing insight and difference, appreciating small scale and large heart. Where no musician sells 10 million copies, but 10 million musicians sing each night. Where we are freed from consumer identity and idolatry to be much more ourselves. Where we have our heads back.

Bill McKibben is the author of *The End of Nature*, *The Age of Missing Information*, and is the pioneer behind the 350.org movement. His latest book is *Eaarth: Making ■ Life on a Tough New Planet*.

This essay was reprinted from *Adbusters* #38.

Unpolluted Meaning Systems:



2011 The United Nations

Year of Infodiversity



EAT THIS!

In 1968 Stanford psychology professor Walter Mischel tempted hungry four-year-olds with a delicious deal. His researchers placed children, one at a time, in a room where they sat alone with a puffy white marshmallow. The children were told that they could either eat the marshmallow right away or they could wait for fifteen minutes - at which point they would be rewarded with a second marshmallow. Then the researcher left the room.

One third of the children gobbled up the marshmallow right away.

One third controlled their appetites for a little while but eventually caved.

One third resisted temptation for the full fifteen minutes and received their reward.

Thirteen years later Mischel did follow-up research that found dramatic differences between the two groups (the gobblers and the resisters). The gobblers, now high school students, were more likely to have behavioral problems and low attention spans, and they found it difficult to maintain friendships. Meanwhile the resisters were thriving. They averaged 210 points higher on their SAT scores than the gobblers. Mischel continued tracking these

groups into their late thirties and found that, as adults, the gobblers had more weight problems and were more likely to have had drug problems too.

Mischel's study points to the need to teach our children self-control, to give them the tools to resist the temptations of consumer culture and the notion that all wants must be immediately satiated. According to Mischel, the daily rituals and activities that go on in the home can be a training ground where we teach our children how to think ■ they can outsmart desire. Simple things - not snacking before dinner, saving up allowance, not opening gifts until Christmas morning - are actually important exercises in cognitive training that equip children to resist.

When one in two adults are overweight, when obesity has become the number one health risk and when financial meltdowns are caused by the lure of easy credit and the desire for luxurious marshmallowy castles, it is past time to act. We must learn to resist. The marshmallow has been winning for too long.

Andrew Tuplin

Last Child in the Woods

By Mike Weilbacher



"Every child," wrote pioneer botanist Luther Burbank, "should have mud pies, grasshoppers, tadpoles, frogs, mud turtles, elderberries, wild strawberries, acorns, chestnuts, trees to climb. Brooks to wade, woodchucks, bats, bees, butterflies, various animals to pet, hayfields, pinecones, rocks to roll, snakes, huckleberries and hornets. And any child who has been deprived of these has been deprived of the best part of education."

In our education-obsessed culture, elite kids play piano and speak three languages by the age of four, but just about every North American kid is deprived. In one of the greatest retreats ever, children are vanishing from a critical piece of territory: their own backyards.

And there isn't a kid on the planet who knows what a huckleberry is, other than a character in a Mark Twain book.

For the average kid only spends ■ minutes a day outside, an amount that shrinks yearly. In this brave new world of Facebook and YouTube, Twitter and Google, iPod and Wii, kids are tuned in to technology, and kindergartners start school with 5,000 hours of TV under their belts.

Typical tweens put in a 40-hour week – a virtual full-time job – watching screens: TV, laptop, cell phone, and so on. They ■ ■ ■ dozens of corporate logos and celebrities on sight – Lady Gaga! Justin Bieber! The cast from "Glee"! – but they cannot name three animals that live in their neighborhood, or three plants.

A first grader can sing every lyric of "Bad Romance," God help us, but has no idea what a chickadee sounds like.

Adults are colluding in this retreat. Our school system has chained kids to their desks, number 2 pencils glued to their hands. If ■ kid is outside

playing sports, it's not a pickup game in the sandlot but a league organized by overzealous parents carpooling kids endlessly from one game to the next.

And the geographic world they wander is collapsing like ■ black hole into their laptops; the typical kid today roams a world only one-ninth the size a child of the '70s did. I wandered Long Island's rapidly decreasing pine forests in the '60s, biking and hiking unthinkable distances, alone and with friends, with neither a cell phone nor a dime to make a call. Because inside our houses were the adults, and who wanted to be there? Every last child was outside, in the street, in the yard, on the corner, at the 7-Eleven.

But letting kids go into a forest alone today is unthinkable, heretical. Remember that kid who was allowed to take the train in New York alone? "Child abuse!" we screamed at his parents. Even my own kids, raised by me, a naturalist, have never been allowed to go unattended into a forest. I am always there: stranger danger, ticks and West Nile have all taken their toll, even ■ me.

This radical retreat from the great outdoors, now called "nature-deficit disorder," a phrase coined by journalist Richard Louv in his groundbreaking book *Last Child in the Woods*, is the greatest health catastrophe facing Western kids.

Ever.

Asthma rates are climbing. Attention-deficit disorders are through the roof. Obesity rates skyrocket; diabetes, linked to weight, soaring. Kids who watch too much TV don't physically move, change the working of their brains and even eat more poorly than other children; there is a distinct inverse relationship between TV use and the amount of vegetables in one's diet. This next generation might not live as long ■ their parents.

At the same time, numerous studies indicate kids are physically and mentally healthier if they spend time outdoors and in nature. They calm down when surrounded by green, which seems to ameliorate their ADD. And free play outside lets children develop social skills they can't get from tube-watching (or from playing sports under

adult supervision), and their skills are more age-appropriate as well.

Here's the kicker: Studies indicate that learning through nature-based programs helps kids score higher on standardized tests. Want your kid to go to Harvard? Have her study outdoors.

But change is blowing in the wind. Louv's book, the first-ever environmental education bestseller, jump-started an international movement that gave birth to a web site, the Children and Nature Network (childrenandnature.org). Places as disparate as nature centers and urban parks ■ unveiling natural playscapes: areas where kids can linger and climb rocks, play with sticks, push sand and gravel around, get muddy – do lots of delicious nothing. Nature preschools are becoming popular, too, as places where toddlers spend quality time outdoors. Even middle schools are developing nature-based curricula where the bulk of the student's school day is given to studying the environment to integrate math, language and social studies into the real world.

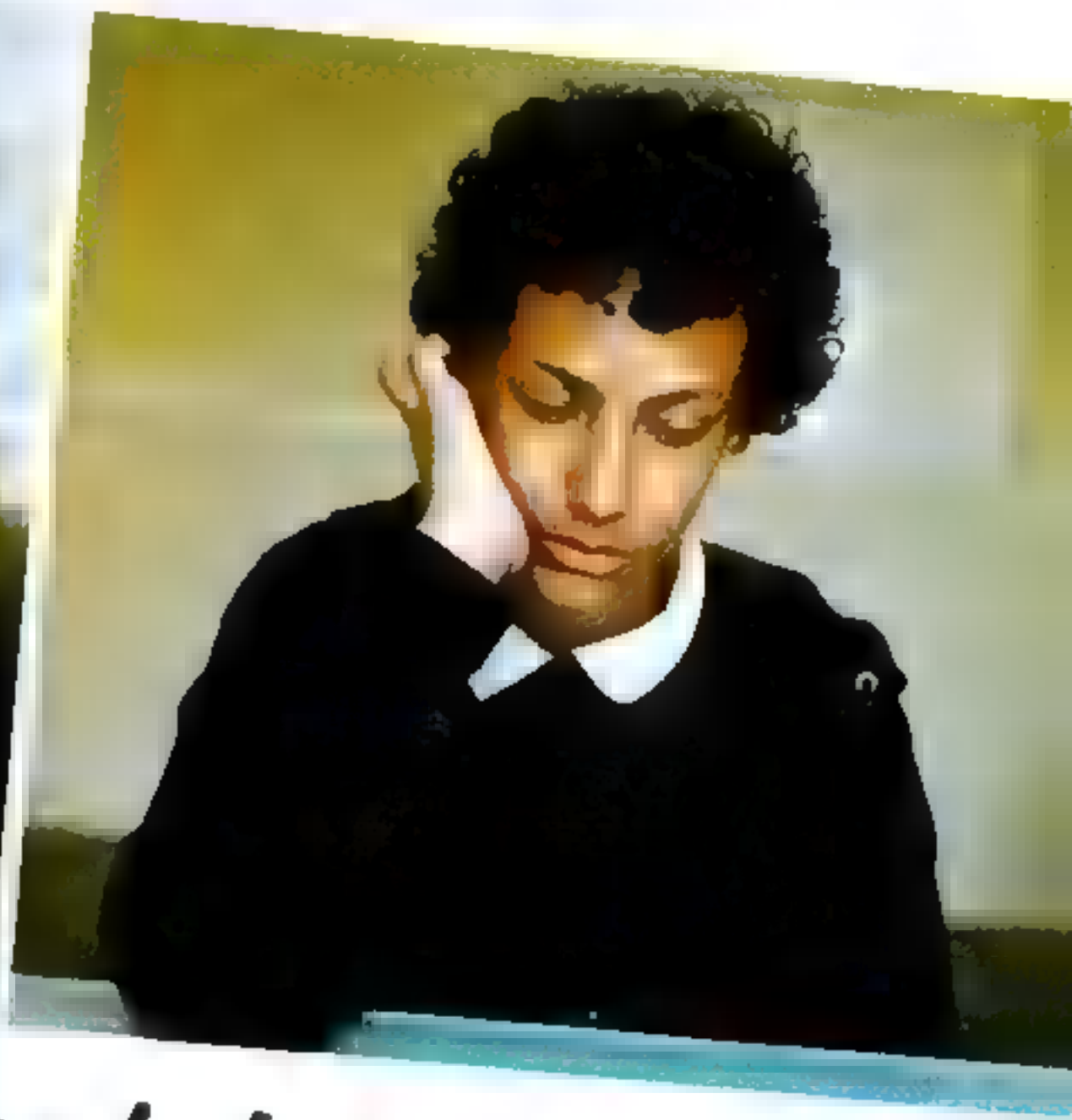
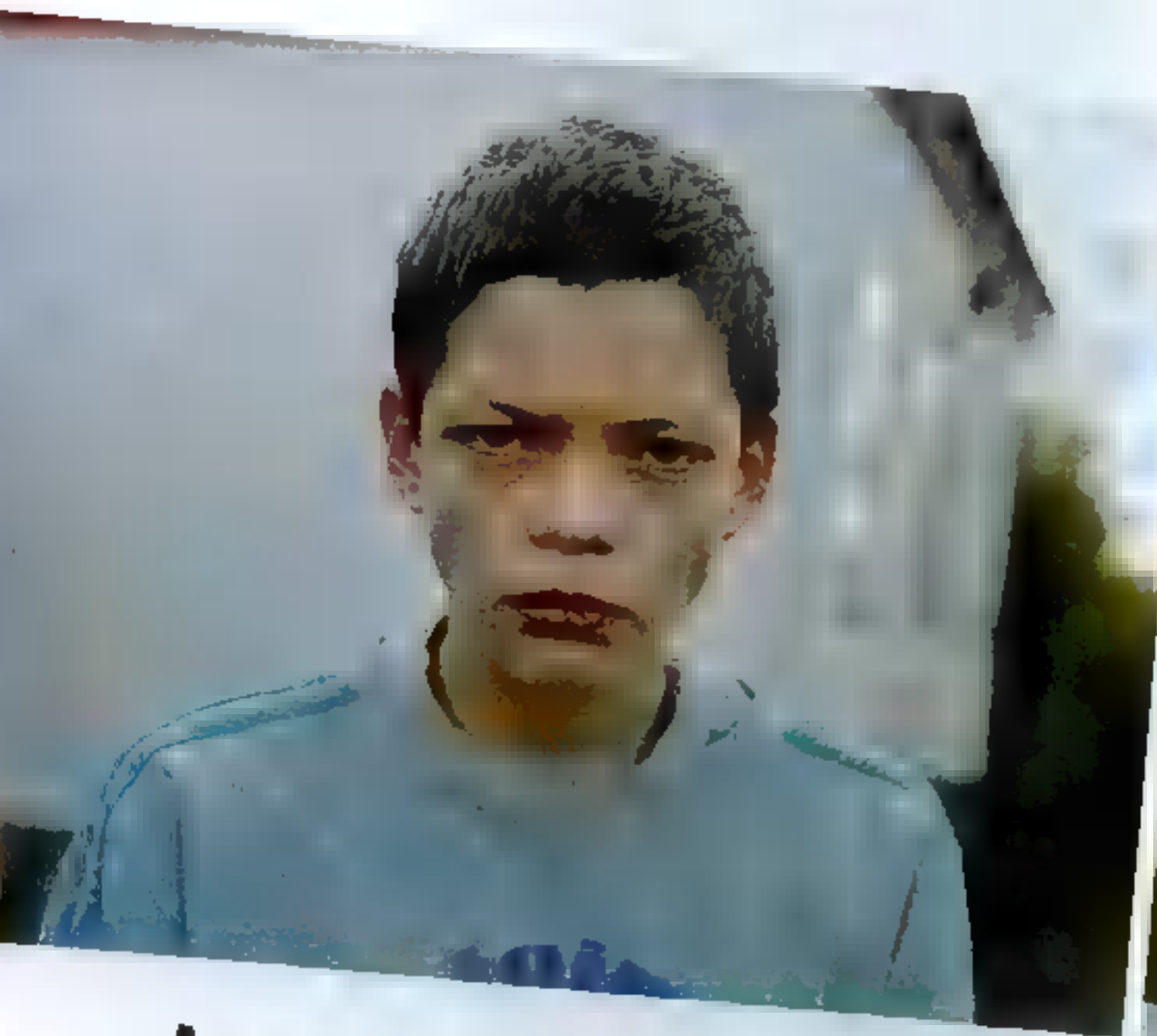
In the United States, some 1,600 NGOs representing 50 million people have organized into a No Child Left Inside coalition, ■ spin on the Bush-era name for his education bill, lobbying Obama for statewide environmental literacy plans that include children spending quality time outdoors.

But it's a long climb, for culture is the very air our children breathe, and culture conspires to convince kids that everything important can be found in that little box. We've seduced children indoors.

Now childhood itself is an endangered species. If we are going to save either the environment or our children, we have to take a surprisingly simple but very radical first step.

End the Great Green Retreat. Unplug our kids and kick them outside. To play. And hear chickadees. And find huckleberries.

Writer-naturalist Mike Weilbacher directs ■ nature center near Philadelphia.



I don't see what makes today so special...

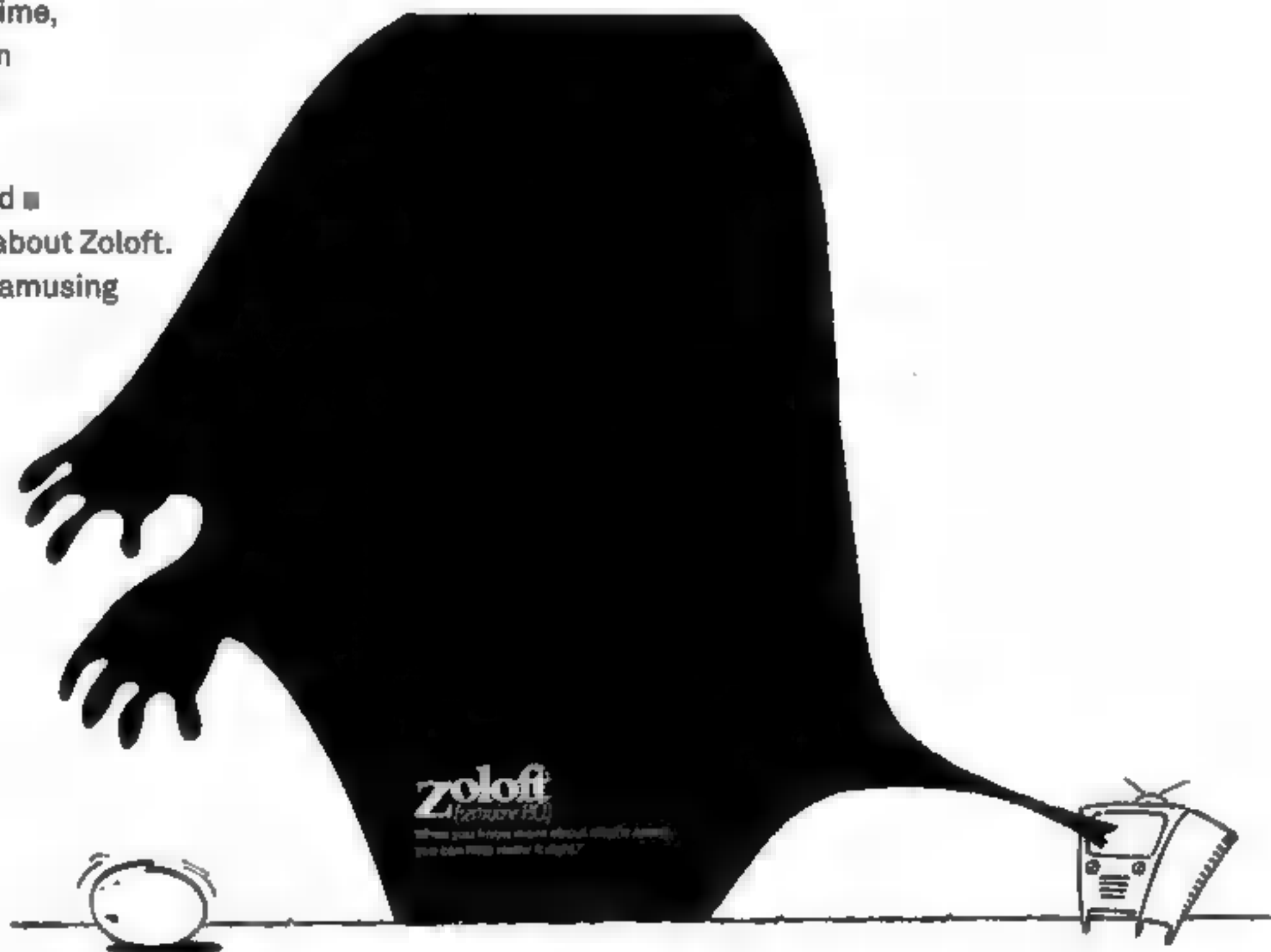


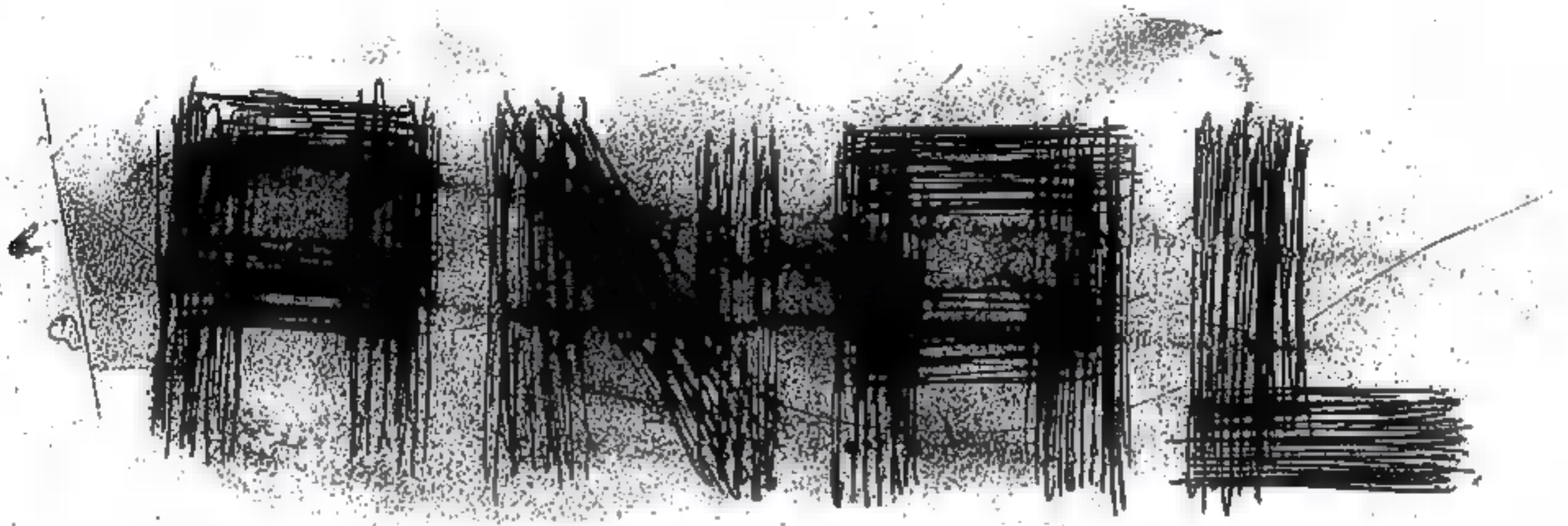
Dear Adbusters,

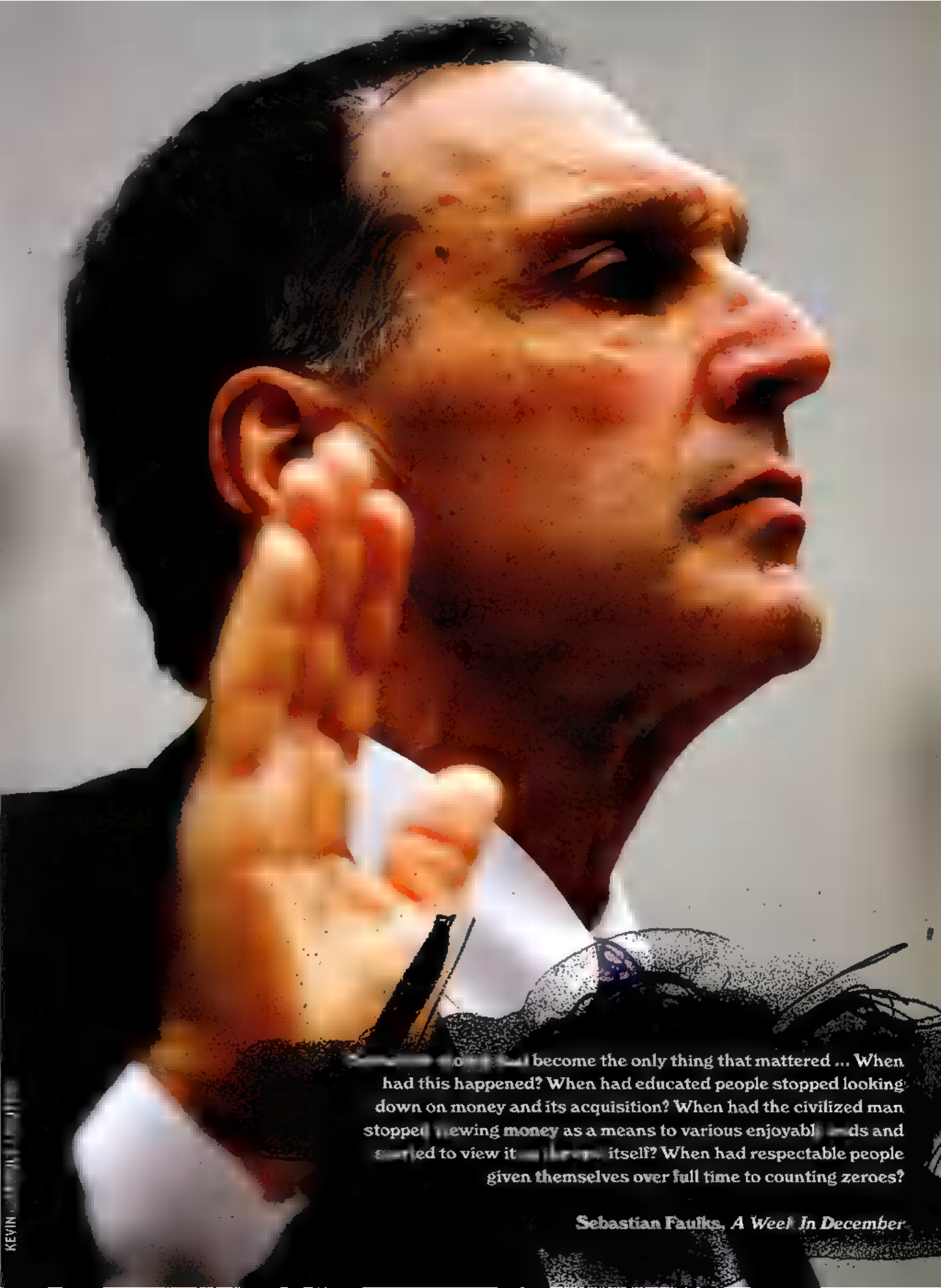
I am a high school student and have noticed that many of my classmates are being swayed by the marijuana movement known as "4/20." Sitting here in class, I find myself wondering why everyone around me is so desperate for an altered perception of reality. As I gaze at my classmates stifling their giggles, checking one another's bloodshot eyes, I wonder if they realize their entire existence depends on that which distracts them from living a real life. I begin to feel sick, I need to escape from this atmosphere. It is only 10:30AM and my girlfriend is already stoned. I call my grandmother with my outdated cell phone that everyone mocks and tell her I'm not feeling well. I begin to wonder if my classmates are depressed and using street drugs to evade their own decaying psyche. Then I realize today is the anniversary of the Columbine shooting, April 20th. Similar to the students at my school, the two shooters were depressed and lived in a virtual world. A doctor prescribed one of them the anti-depressant "Zoloft." Side effects include things like aggression, a lack of remorse, and depersonalization. How do all my pot-smoking hipster classmates feel about that 4/20? They think 4/20 is a celebration of peace, the embrace of a laid-back ethos? And 4/20 is Hitler's birthday. Truth is, most of my classmates skip school and use recreational drugs every day. I don't know what makes today special.

Thanks for your time,
Morgan Macnevin
Summerside, PEI

PS – I've attached a subvertisement about Zoloft. You might find it amusing for an amateur.







...to become the only thing that mattered ... When had this happened? When had educated people stopped looking down on money and its acquisition? When had the civilized man stopped viewing money as a means to various enjoyable ends and started to view it as an end in itself? When had respectable people given themselves over full time to counting zeroes?

Sebastian Faulks, *A Week In December*

Fortune

\$4.99 a Copy

MAY 2010



Asked to design a cover for Fortune Magazine's 500 issue, celebrated artist Chris Ware came up with this incisive critique of American capitalism. Complete with foreclosed homes, a Mexican sweatshop and CEOs dancing while Wall Street loots the treasury, Ware's cover illustrates the chaos of the US economy.

Being the unapologetic cheerleaders of capitalism that they are, Fortune's editors found the submission too true to life and predictably rejected the cover.

A MESSAGE TO ECONOMICS STUDENTS ALL OVER THE WORLD

We are a colony of maggots, feeding on nature's bloated corpse while economic policy makers soothe our troubled minds with lies. *Not to worry, they tell us, we're pulling out of this recession, we're making progress – the key is more liquidity, more stimulus, more credit, more consumption, more growth.*

The time has come to call their bluff.

We need to band together and challenge this powerful intellectual army, whose generals include Greenspan, Summers, Bernanke, Geithner, who have boots on the ground in Blankfein, Buffett, Bloomberg, Strauss-Kahn, whose propaganda ministers include Wolf, Friedman, Krugman and textbook authors Samuelson, Nordhaus, Mankiw, and whose foot soldiers are the business and economics professors in universities around the world. Their combined efforts perpetuate the great economic myth of our time: the necessity of ever-increasing growth and consumption, ■ myth that keeps the ghost ship of consumer capitalism sailing perilously towards certain destruction.

There has never been ■ better time to wage this meme war. In the aftermath of the meltdown of 2008 (which not even one in a hundred economists saw coming), the profession is demoralized

and ripe for a monumental mindshift ... the very kind that transformed the science of astronomy 400 years ago, when we suddenly woke up to the fact that the Earth revolves around the Sun and not the other way around. Today, as climate catastrophe looms, threatening the greatest market failure the world has ever seen, we are experiencing another mass awakening. We are beginning to realize that our human money economy is not the center of the world, but rather just ■ subset of the planetary bioeconomy.

You are feeling restless, the public has grown uneasy, and the internet is buzzing with dissent. The movement to overhaul curricula, pioneer new measures of progress and usher in a true-cost global market regime, suddenly feels unstoppable.

Have some fun, whip up debate, slap up posters, invite dissenting guest speakers to address your class and relish the thrill of playing cat and mouse with your professors. We are standing at the beginning of a new era in which ■ new kind of economy, a sustainable economy, is struggling to be born.

Go to kickitover.org and be part of it.

for the wild, Kalle

kickitover.org

footprintnetwork.org

neweconomicthinking.org

neweconomics.org

steadystate.org

ecoeco.org

uvm.edu/giee

postcarbon.org

thesolutionsjournal.com

eartheconomics.org

earthinc.org

rprogress.org

theoil drum.com

IT'S NEARLY MORNING


The sun climbs its invisible cord and slats the walls between the blinds, but barely so. You rise softly, so as not to wake your son sleeping beside you. You creep into the bathroom and then unfold the white piece of paper you keep in the medicine cabinet – beautiful brown powder more expansive and warm than a woman's tropical embrace. Acrid fluff and three quick snorts. Cold palmful of water, then move to the silent living room. Eyelids drop and rise like nets returning an empty bounty. Windows surround you in accusation, yet look how beautiful the world is: Evening's dull slate polishes itself raw into the bone of morning, and a neighbor's stand of purple iris crowns past its own inevitable sweetness as the sunlight dials in. Grope at your T-shirt under this weather of sobbing indifference and prepare the wilted air for something important. Breathe in. But who are you kidding – there is lush to be had, great purity of heartswoon. Settle onto the couch and pick up the novel your wife was reading last week, before she left. The couch begins to silver into a plume of deep rushing. Eyelids again start closing and your chest is warmly filled. The book slips from your fingers – in another time, you hear its quiet thump against your breastbone. Then a doorknob twists and a portal is crossed, small feet drumming the wood floor, but far away, like thunder falling through distant clouds. "Daddy, where's breakfast?" The words sour your face and you want nothing of language. He breathes expectantly on you and you try willing him away. He places his hand on yours. All those undulations brailled across your heart start their terrible unhooking, goodbye they call, goodbye. You can't bear any of it. "I'm hungry, daddy. Please." As you keep your eyes shut, you see your own father. Before he waved to everyone eating in the grass on a red and white tablecloth near the trestle. Before he jumped. He fell soundlessly as a picture of him falling. Earlier that morning, he whistled for everyone to hurry, to pile into the running car. As you sidled past, he rubbed your back as if searching for wings. You continue to lie on the couch. Your son does not move. You both do not move. And as the sunlight fully undresses across your face, your eyelids grow warm, then brighten, and you can finally see all the colors of your dreams.

Christopher Locke



Transvoid : The Mental Desert

In isolated Northern British Columbia, Photographer Roderik Henderson captures individuals suspended in the void between departure and destination.



I arrive home from work, drained and empty. Too tired for human interaction, I press the buttons on the remote and stare blankly into the big TV box. It's not long before the commercials and endless parade of product placements overwhelm my defenses and penetrate my mind. Every detail of every message is meticulously calculated, designed to be repetitive and hypnotic, played over and over until the mindfuck finally kicks in. My head is now filled with fatuous desire. Fast forward. Like a junkie on a comedown, I stumble into the sterile mall corridors as if in some kind of trance. The motley group of shoppers surrounding me, all the same — glazed eyes, blank stares, faces twisted into ugly masks of want. We are an army of zombies. Instead of brains and human flesh, we devour strategically placed merchandise and affordably priced products manufactured in China. I quickly drain my plastic cards and my soul, returning home with my bounty of shopping bags. All filled with mass produced garbage, quickly tossed onto a pile of all the other trash I've accumulated. Tomorrow I will wake up, have my coffee and leave the comfort and security of my home for work. I will spend another long and tedious day in the indentured monotony that masquerades as a job. When it's over, I will again return home and rest in front of the big TV box and wait for the radiating commercials, like little particles penetrating what is left of my mind. And every night I tell myself, "maybe one of these days, I'll pull the plug."

Malcolm Klimowicz









AVATAR

9/11 conspiracy

9 11 conspiracy theories

9 11 conspiracy theories debunked

9 11 conspiracy theory

9 11 conspiracy facts

9 11 conspiracy video

9 11 conspiracy movie

9 11 conspiracy theories videos

9 11 conspiracy controlled demolition

9 11 conspiracy documentary

CRAZY LIKE US

by Ethan

To travel internationally is to be constantly reminded by the way American culture permeates the world. We cringe at the new indoor Mlimani shopping mall in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. We bow our heads at the sight of a McDonald's in Tiananmen Square and a Nike factory in Malaysia. The visual landscape of the world has become increasingly familiar. For Americans the old adage has become bizarrely true: wherever we go, there we are. We know the feeling that our influence over the rest of the world is coming at a great cost: loss of the world's diversity and complexity. For all our self-incrimination, however, we have yet to face our most disturbing effect on the rest of the world. Our golden arches do not represent our most lasting impact on other cultures; rather, it is how we are reshaping the landscape of the human psyche itself. We are engaged in the grand project of Americanizing the world's understanding of the human mind.

This might seem like an impossible task to back up, as such a change would be happening inside the conscious and unconscious thoughts of more than six billion people. But there are telltale signs that have recently become unmistakable. Particularly telling are the changing manifestations of mental illness around the world. In the past two decades, for instance, eating disorders have risen in Hong Kong and

now spreading to inland China. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has become the common diagnosis, the lingua franca of suffering, following wars and natural disasters. In addition, a particularly Americanized version of depression is on the rise in countries across the world.

What is the pathogen that has led to these outbreaks and epidemics? And what currents do these illnesses travel?

The premise of the book is that the virus is us. Over the past twenty years, we Americans have been industriously exporting our ideas about mental illness. Our definitions and treatments have become the international standards. Although this has often been for the best of the world, we've failed to foresee the full impact of these efforts. It turns out that how people in a culture think about mental illnesses – how they understand, prioritize the symptoms, attempt to heal them and set expectations for their course and outcome – influences the diseases themselves. In teaching the rest of the world to think like us, we have been, for better and worse, homogenizing the way the world goes mad.

There is now a remarkable body of research that suggests that mental illnesses are not, as sometimes assumed, universal. Instead, they have appeared in different cultures in strikingly different and unique forms.

Indonesian men have been known to experience *amuk*, in which a minor social insult launches an extended period of brooding punctuated by an episode of murderous rage. Southeastern Asian males sometimes suffer from *koro*, the debilitating certainty that their genitals are retracting into their body. Across the fertile crescent of the Middle East there is *zaar*, a mental illness related to spirit possession that brings forth dissociative episodes of crying, laughing, shouting and singing.

The diversity that can be found across cultures can be seen across time as well. Because the troubled mind has been perceived in terms of diverse religious, scientific and social beliefs of discrete cultures, the forms of madness from one place and time in history often look remarkably different from the forms of madness in another. These differing forms of mental illness can sometimes appear and disappear within a generation. In his book *Mad Travelers* Ian Hacking documents the fleeting appearance in Victorian Europe of a fugue state in which young men would walk in a trance for hundreds of miles. Symptoms of mental illnesses are the lightning in the zeitgeist, the product of culture and belief in specific times and specific places. That thousands of upper-class women in the mid-nineteenth century couldn't get out of bed due to the onset of hysterical leg paralysis gives us a visceral understanding of the restrictions set on women's social roles at the time.

But with the increasing speed of globalization, something has changed. The remarkable diversity once seen among different cultures' conceptions of madness is rapidly disappearing. A few mental illnesses identified and popularized in the United States – depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anorexia among them – now

appear to be spreading across cultural boundaries and around the world with the speed of contagious diseases. Indigenous forms of mental illness and healing are being bulldozed by disease categories and treatments made in the USA.

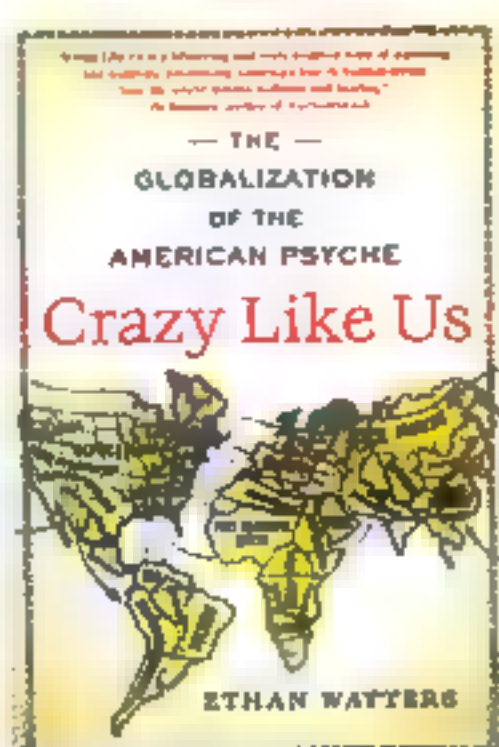
There is no doubt that the Western mental health profession has had a remarkable global influence over the meaning and treatment of mental illness. Mental health professionals trained in the West, and in the United States in particular, create the official categories of mental diseases. The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the DSM (the bible of the profession, as it is sometimes called), has become the worldwide standard. In addition American researchers and organizations run the premier scholarly journals and host top conferences in the fields of psychology and psychiatry. Western universities train the world's most influential clinicians and academics. Western drug companies dole out the funds for research and spend billions marketing medications for mental illnesses. Western-trained traumatologists rush in wherever war or natural disasters strike to deliver "psychological first aid," bringing with them their assumptions about how the mind becomes broken and how it is best healed.

What motivates this in this global effort to convince the world to think like us? There are several answers to this question, but one of them is quite simple: drug company profits. These multibillion-dollar conglomerates have an incentive to promote universal disease categories because they can make fortunes selling the drugs that purport to cure those illnesses.

Other reasons are more complex. Many modern mental health practitioners and researchers believe that the science behind our drugs, our illness categories and our theories of the mind have put the field beyond the influence of constantly shifting cultural trends and beliefs. After all, we now have machines that can literally watch the mind at work. We can change the chemistry of the brain in a variety of ways and examine DNA sequences for abnormalities. For a generation now we have proudly promoted the biomedical notion of mental illness: the idea that these diseases should be understood clinically and scientifically, like physical illnesses. The assumption is that these remarkable scientific advances have allowed modern-day practitioners to avoid the biases and mistakes of their predecessors.

Western mental health practitioners are prone to believe that, unlike those culturally contrived manifestations of mental illness, the 844 pages of the DSM-IV prior to the inclusion of culture-bound syndromes describe *real* disorders of the mind: illnesses with symptomatology and outcomes relatively unaffected by shifting cultural beliefs. And, the logic goes, if they are unaffected by culture, then these disorders are surely universal to humans everywhere. Their application around the world therefore represents simply the brave march of scientific knowledge.

Ethan Watters authored *Urban Tribes*, coauthored *Making Monsters* and cofounded the San Francisco Writers' Grotto. His latest book is *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche*.







Yes, we live in an insane world of terror where unmanned predator drones assassinate remorselessly, where unstable nations dream of nuclear power, and where our own governments watch us suspiciously.

Do you feel the same unease pervades the global collective unconscious.



"The saw" was a popular form of execution used in ancient Persia.



9 liters of water were forced down the victim's throat during the "water cure," a torture method used extensively in 17th-century France.

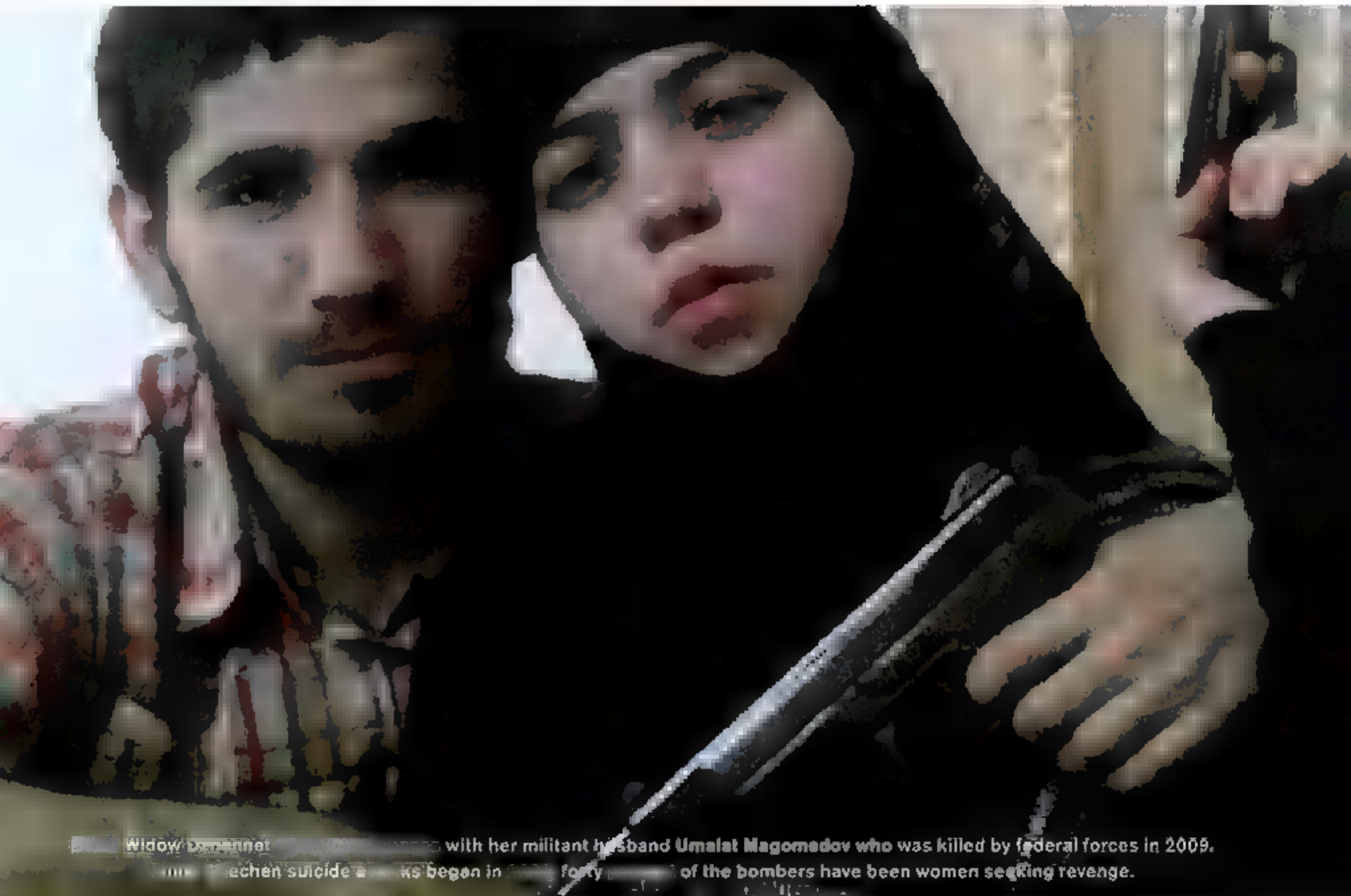
SPOT THE SEWER RAT

Following the double suicide bombings on Moscow's subway system Prime Minister Vladimir Putin demanded that those responsible be scraped "from the bottom of the sewers." His tough talk echoed statements he made in 1999 when he promised to "pursue the terrorists everywhere" and "rub them out in the outhouse."

After following them into Chechnya with 90,000 Russian troops Putin emerged from obscurity and

Grozny. The Russian invasion of Chechnya killed between 30,000 and 40,000 Chechen civilians out of a population of one million.

Professor Robert Pape of the University of Chicago has done extensive research on the motivations behind suicide bombing. As he found in Iraq, Palestine and Sri Lanka, Pape concludes that Chechen suicide terrorism is a last resort against brutal military occupation.



Widow **Dorannat** with her militant husband **Umalat Magomedov** who was killed by federal forces in 2009. Chechen suicide attacks began in 2000. Forty percent of the bombers have been women seeking revenge.

climbed to the upper echelons of Russian power by prosecuting one of the most vicious and brutal counterinsurgency campaigns in modern history.

Putin painted the centuries-old struggle for Chechen independence as an Islamic extremist movement and ordered a scorched-earth campaign in the Caucasus. It featured the extensive burning of Chechen homes, extrajudicial executions, the systematic rape of Chechen women and indiscriminate bombing and shelling of civilian areas, including the near destruction of the capital,

Of the 63 Chechens who killed themselves in suicide attacks since 2000, 40 percent were female. These so-called "Black Widows" sought to avenge a husband, child or close relative killed by occupying Russian soldiers. The murdered Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya once said that the Black Widows "are trying to force Russians to feel the same pain that they have felt."

It's becoming harder to tell the difference between those occupying the halls of power and those who live in the margins, shadows and sewers.

IDENTITY CRISIS

COMING TO TERMS WITH IMPERIAL DECLINE



In the aftermath of the trauma suffered by the American psyche on 9/11, the United States lashed out blindly and irrationally in fear and anger, deploying its military to the corners of the world and weakening itself in the process. Now, over eight years later, with the economy in shambles and the military overstretched, the sun is setting on the American empire and experts say it's time for the US public to accept their country's declining prowess, pressure their government to reduce its global military footprint and prepare for a looming national identity crisis.

Political psychologists believe that the shock and horror of the 9/11 attacks damaged the collective American consciousness, causing the country to stumble forward with a misguided and self-destructive foreign policy intended to destroy ■ exaggerated enemy.

Dr. Deborah Larson, a political psychologist at UCLA, explains, "9/11 removed ■ ■■■■ of invulnerability that Americans had felt, and fear

sprang from the uncertainty. We overreacted and tried to gain control of the world to eliminate even a small probability of being attacked. It was totally irrational."

Dr. Richard Hermann, Director of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at Ohio State University, says, "A weird combination of fear, panic, anger and crude patriotism made us obsessed with an exaggerated threat. The administration's leadership watched this with excitement and believed it was their chance to shape the world."

Though the United States has maintained a massive military presence around the world since the end of World War II, the reach of US forces expanded quickly after 9/11. Besides the huge undertakings in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military also established US Africa Command, expanded its presence in Latin America, began launching constant drone attacks in Pakistan, recently approved the sale of over 13 billion dollars in arms to Taiwan and is currently setting up missile defense systems in Romania, Poland, the

Czech Republic, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait among other countries.

With upwards of 800 bases in 120 countries, the United States continues to spend almost as much ■ its military ■ the rest of the world combined at a time when the economy is plummeting and many Americans ■■ struggling.

Wayne Madsen, an investigative journalist and former Navy intelligence officer, believes that military overreach is eroding American power rather than projecting it: "The extension of US influence abroad is unsustainable and unaffordable and it weakens us politically, militarily and financially. We're trying to be the Roman Empire and we're going the way of them."

Dr. Hermann worries that the money spent on military engagements will hurt America's competitiveness in the future: "We're spending 100 billion a year in Iraq alone. You could take the top 20 universities in America and fund them, make them free for everybody every year we've been there. It's a terrible opportunity cost that we've paid."

A psychological shift is underway in the United States as the evidence mounts and there is growing public awareness of the detrimental costs of maintaining such a large military. Dr. Hermann explains that a public suffering through the recession is more concerned about its financial well-being than its physical safety: "If you're unemployed and you're getting foreclosed on, you're a lot less worried about al Qaeda."

Nevertheless, political psychologists believe that guilt keeps the average person from speaking out against the economic effects of imperial overreach. "Only a small fraction of the public is willing to ■■■■ in the military and I think the rest of the people feel guilty that they aren't enlisted and essentially get a free pass. They might not like it but they feel if they have to pay tax dollars its okay," explains Dr. Hermann.

It is perhaps ironic that the American public still fears terrorism despite being bled dry maintaining the strongest military in human history. "It's absolutely ridiculous," says Madsen, "These are ragtag people living in caves." Hermann is frustrated by the contradiction in military spending and the threat faced: "There is a big disconnect here. There is huge spending on the military but at the same time

an understanding that the military can't protect us against the most likely attacks."

Guardian columnist and London School of Economics professor Martin Jacques is an expert on the rise of China. He feels that many Americans hold on to delusions of grandeur to keep their pride afloat, denying the reality of waning US power.

"The decline of American power will entail the progressive reduction of American overseas military commitments," he says. "But a nation in decline finds it extremely difficult to let go. It's ■ reluctant process and ■ form of retreat."

Jacques watched his own country go through the painful ordeal. "Britain was very reluctant to let go, not just the political elite but also the people. They lived an imperial role and didn't like losing it. It gave them status, it gave them power and the knowledge that it was our role and responsibility in the world."

"The military enjoys a very privileged position in the American mind, and the same experience will be had in the United States."

Military superiority is very closely tied to the American identity and many believe that continued public support for imperial overreach stems from a desire to maintain prestige rather than from pragmatic security concerns.

"It's very disorienting to lose your national identity. Part of being an American means knowing that you are part of the most powerful military state," explains Dr. Larson. "If the US were to withdraw from various parts of the world, people would fear that we were declining and were no longer a hegemon. We would lose a lot of our national pride and prestige."

It is time for the US public to accept that the military cannot maintain ■ global monopoly on violence and that rather than protecting and enriching them, imperial endeavors invariably become costly, never-ending counterinsurgency campaigns against dedicated, dug-in enemies.

In order for the American psyche to forge a new identity in the face of shifting realities, the US public must demand the change that their president promised, must urge leaders to scale back overseas military commitments, focus on education, technology and innovation and embrace ■ global leadership role rooted in soft power and diplomacy.

Blake Sifton

CRAZY

Though their actions invoke less dramatic imagery than the interrogators and prison guards who tortured and humiliated Muslim detainees at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, equally guilty ■ the legions of professionals who facilitated the abuse.

Although the principal maxim of medical ethics is "First do no harm," psychologists and doctors working for the military and CIA actively assisted in the torture of human beings. Psychologists helped fine-tune techniques such as sleep deprivation, stress positions and waterboarding, and doctors often monitored harsh interrogations, intervening when necessary to keep struggling prisoners alive and alert so the questioning could continue.

How could medical professionals demonstrate such little empathy in the presence of human suffering?

"People are capable of incredible cruelty. It's increased in circumstances where there aren't clear rules and boundaries," says psychoanalyst Dr. Stephen Soldz. "We dehumanized the enemy after 9/11. We did it as a culture and the military did it spectacularly well. Like many others, military doctors felt a duty to serve their country."

In 2007 Dr. Soldz urged the American Psychological Association to ban psychologists from participating in the interrogation of terror suspects.

"Professional ethics are always weak," he says. "We have wonderful statements by professional associations about what the ethics are, but many people don't internalize them."

Justice Department memos revealed that doctors with the CIA's Office of Medical Services declared that depriving prisoners of sleep for upwards of 180 hours was not classified as torture, nor was hosing down detainees with freezing cold water for up to two-thirds of the time it takes hypothermia to set in.

"They signed up to be part of the CIA's covert operations, so presumably their commitment to medical ethics was long gone," Dr. Soldz explains.

Another group whose human empathy lost out to

zealous patriotism and cold, hard professionalism were lawyers like John Yoo at the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel. They crafted the framework for the authorization of torture and it was their technical expertise in legal jargon that allowed the United States to follow the path of every oppressive state before it and justify its disregard for human rights through a mantra of security.

"A few bad apples" did not cause the degradation and anguish of thousands of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay and an untold number of secret prisons around the world. Their pain was the product of system-wide moral failures by individuals whose conduct is supposed to be held to the highest ethical standards.

The Justice Department recently determined that the lawyers who devised the technical justification for torture "exercised poor judgment" but were not guilty of professional misconduct. To this day there has been no investigation into the behavior of the medical personnel involved.

Kishore Mahbubani wrote, "In 1989, if anyone had dared to predict that within 15 years the foremost 'beacon' of human rights would become the first Western developed state to reintroduce torture, everyone would have shouted 'impossible.' Yet the impossible has happened!"

The speed with which the United States abandoned its principles and resorted to torture was startling. Centuries of progress were essentially abandoned overnight in ■ fit of fear and blind rage as the darkest potential of human nature was allowed to infect even the most venerable professions.

For there to be any chance of America reclaiming its moral legitimacy, President Obama's government of hope and change must prosecute those responsible and refuse to allow the crimes of the recent past to be ignored, forgiven and forgotten.

Blake Sifton

LIKE YOO



If you're a lawyer, yet, a fancy-pants government lawyer, an expert on the military, on your looking for some expert advice. They're holding some dangerous enemy combatants who might have important information. The agents know not supposed, you know "torture," what exactly can they do the interrogation along? Well, Mr. Fancy Pants, what do you Yoo (John Yoo), we know what you would do, because in 2002 the government came knocking and Yoo delivered.

Yoo put his own stress positions until it produced exactly what Department needed: a series of memos providing the White House with his own legal interpretation of how much harm could be done to enemy combatants in wartime. The White House was advised that

in order not to transgress international law, agents must not intentionally inflict "severe" pain — pain so intense it could organ failure or death. Questions morality entered the discussion. Men were hour periods, put in stress positions, deprived of sleep in air-conditioned cells where they lay uncovered, and assaulted by music blasted unceasingly at variable volumes ("Your God" by Deicide, "White America" by Eminem, "Aguilera" by Aguilera and "Born in the USA" by Bruce Springsteen were all used).

When the blood had settled, Yoo's work was reviewed by his peers in the Office of Legal Responsibility. They unanimously condemned it. The head of the Office of Legal Counsel, Daniel Levin, read it and exclaimed: "This is insane, who wrote this?"

AMERICAN *psychosis*

■ CHRIS HEDGES

THE UNITED STATES, LIKE THE KIND OF TWILIGHT in which it dwells, is a country consumed by illusions. It pours its most abundant intellectual energy on the trivial and the absurd. It is represented by the hollow megawatt of public opinion as the public good. The public good licenses a dark voyeurism into other people's humiliation, pain, weakness and shame. Day after day, one of the saga of American life is Michael Jackson, a young person or child whose vulnerability is made a commodity. Despite his enormous popularity, he is a person whose criminality of his financial abuse

is the most recent in a nation whose media community, from honesty to self-interest, is free to parade its own rituals each night on television as a ritual of death. To cling to a ritualized behavior are voted off the shows. To lose respect for a person and a chance for a new start, directed on by millions of viewers, elect to "disappear" the unwanted. In the final credits of the reality show America's Next Top Model, a woman who had been the episode's star vanishes from the screen, cast on the screen, lined up as a loser. At least to the television audience, no person. Celebrities that can no longer generate profit, good or bad, vanish. In these shows, paradoxically, teach, is a world of modulated and controlled behavior and a constant performance and attention.

Let us hope that the coming century will be
in the further character, form and substance of all those
who oppose us. We hope, after all, that every nation has
capacity to rise, for we have a right to rise, and have duties
deserve to be raised. Those who do, those who are raised up
against or against them, will be belittled and mocked. Those who
are used and discarded like Styrofoam boxes that held
dead men and women, whose effluvia are swelling the
atmosphere of our cities, the prisons and the city kitchens.

[illegible]

We have a right in the way of the world to what we desire. We can do anything, even make money, to be happy and to become famous. Once fame and wealth are achieved, they become their own justification, their own reality. How one gets there is irrelevant to this perverted ethic. Take the case of the Goldman Sachs or the oil fields or the global economy and the billions of small shareholders who had bought in for retirement or college. The heads of these companies are like the winners on a reality television game show. Others to whom the money walked away with hundreds of millions of dollars in losses are left with the ethic of the game show. The ethic of the game show has been pushed into one bizarre, universal ethic. The game show has banished the possibility of the game of life. To a game world or avoiding it is the only option. A society that came of age in the 1950s will not survive.

The tantalizing illusions offered by our consumer culture, however, are vanishing for most citizens as we head toward collapse. The ability of the corporate state to pacify the country by extending credit and providing cheap manufactured goods to the masses is gone. The jobs we are shedding are not coming back, as the White House economist Lawrence Summers tacitly acknowledges with the talks of a "jobless recovery." The belief that democracy lies in the choice between competing brands and the accumulation of personal wealth at the expense of others is exposed as a fraud. Freedom can no longer be conflated with the free market. The travails of the poor are rapidly becoming the travails of the middle class, especially as unemployment insurance runs out. The class warfare, once buried under the happy illusion that we were all going to enter an age of prosperity with unfettered capitalism, is returning with a vengeance.

America is sinking under trillions in debt it can never repay and stays afloat by frantically selling about \$2 billion in Treasury bonds a day to the Chinese. It saw 2.8 million people lose their homes in 2009 to foreclosure or bank repossessions – nearly 8,000 people a day – and stands idle as they are joined by another 2.4 million people this year. It refuses to prosecute the Bush administration for obvious war crimes, including the use of torture, and has no reason to dismantle Bush's secrecy laws or restore habeas corpus. Its infrastructure is crumbling. Deficits are pushing individual states to bankruptcy and forcing the closure of everything from schools to parks. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have squandered trillions of dollars, appear endless. There are 50 million Americans in real poverty and tens of millions of Americans in a category called "near poverty." One in eight Americans – and one in four children – depend

on food stamps to eat. And yet, in the midst of it all, we continue to be a country consumed by happy talk and happy thoughts. We continue to embrace the illusion of inevitable progress, personal success and rising prosperity. Reality is not considered an impediment to desire.

When a culture lives within an illusion it perpetuates a state of permanent infantilism or childishness. As the gap widens between the illusion and reality, as we suddenly grasp that it is our home being foreclosed or our job that is not coming back, we react like children. We scream and yell for a savior, someone who promises us revenge, moral renewal and new glory. It is not a new story. A furious and sustained backlash by a betrayed and angry populace, one unprepared intellectually, emotionally and psychologically for collapse, will sweep aside the Democrats and most of the Republicans and will usher America into a new dark age. It was the economic collapse in Yugoslavia that gave Slobodan Milosevic. It was the Weimar Republic that vomited up Adolf Hitler. And it was the breakdown in Tsarist Russia that opened the door for Lenin and the Bolsheviks. A cabal of proto-fascist misfits, from Christian demagogues to loudmouth talk show hosts, whom we naively dismiss as buffoons, will find a following with promises of revenge and moral renewal. And in all totalitarian societies, those who do not pay fealty to the illusions imposed by the state become the outcasts, the persecuted.

The decline of American empire began long before the current economic meltdown or the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It began before the first Gulf War or Ronald Reagan. It began when we shifted, in the words of Harvard historian Charles Maier, from an "empire of production" to an "empire of consumption." By the end of the Vietnam War, when the costs of the war ate away at Lyndon Johnson's Great

Society and domestic oil production began its steady, inexorable decline, we ■■■ our country transformed from one that primarily produced to one that primarily consumed. We started borrowing to maintain ■ level of consumption as well as ■ empire we could no longer afford. We began to use force, especially in the Middle East, to feed our insatiable thirst for cheap oil. We substituted the illusion of growth and prosperity for real growth and prosperity. The bill is now due. America's most dangerous enemies are not Islamic radicals but those who sold us the perverted ideology of free-market capitalism and globalization. They have dynamited the very foundations of our society. In the 17th century these speculators would have been hung. Today they run the government and consume billions in taxpayer subsidies.

As the pressure mounts, as the despair and desperation reach into larger and larger segments of the populace, the mechanisms of corporate and government control are being bolstered to prevent civil unrest and instability. The emergence of the corporate state always means the emergence of the security state. This is why the Bush White House pushed through the Patriot Act (and its renewal), the suspension of habeas corpus, the practice of "extraordinary rendition," warrantless wiretapping on American citizens and the refusal to ensure free and fair elections with verifiable ballot-counting. The motive behind these measures is not to fight terrorism or to bolster national security. It is to seize and maintain internal control. It is about controlling us.

And yet, even in the face of catastrophe, mass culture continues to assure us that if we close our eyes, if we visualize what we want, if we have faith in ourselves, if we tell God that we believe in miracles, if we tap into our inner strength, if we grasp that we are truly

exceptional, if we focus on happiness, our lives will be harmonious and complete. This cultural retreat into illusion, whether peddled by positive psychologists, by Hollywood or by Christian preachers, is magical thinking. It turns worthless mortgages and debt into wealth. It turns the destruction of our manufacturing base into an opportunity for growth. It turns alienation and anxiety into a cheerful conformity. It turns a nation that wages illegal wars and administers offshore penal colonies where it openly practices torture into the greatest democracy on earth. And it keeps us from fighting back.

Resistance movements will have to look now at the long night of slavery, the decades of oppression in the Soviet Union and the curse of fascism for models. The goal will no longer be the possibility of reforming the system but of protecting truth, civility and culture from mass contamination. It will require the kind of schizophrenic lifestyle that characterizes all totalitarian societies. Our private and public demeanors will often have to stand in stark contrast. Acts of defiance will often be subtle and nuanced. They will be carried out not for short term gain but the assertion of our integrity. Rebellion will have an ultimate if not easily definable purpose. The more we retreat from the culture ■ large the more room we will have to carve out lives of meaning, the more we will be able to wall off the flood of illusions disseminated by mass culture and the more we will retain sanity in ■ insane world. The goal will become the ability to endure.

Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the *New York Times*, is the author of several books including the best sellers *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* and *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*.



Israel's 22-day-long assault on the Gaza Strip killed 1,400 Palestinians and left more than 6,000 homes destroyed or badly damaged. Roughly the size of Seattle or Philadelphia, the Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated places on earth.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) pounded the tiny coastal territory with hundreds of tons of bombs and thousands of artillery rounds, including shells containing white phosphorus. This chemical weapon burns to the bone, cannot be extinguished with water and is illegal to use in civilian areas under the Geneva Convention.

Despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary, Israeli military officials insisted they were not deploying white phosphorus. "I can tell you with certainty that white phosphorus is absolutely not being used," an IDF spokesperson told CNN.

"The IDF acts only in accordance with what is permitted by international law and does not use white phosphorus," said IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi.

Perhaps this knowing deceit should not come ■ a surprise as Israeli author B. Michael explains, "The official communiqués published by the IDF have progressively liberated themselves from the constraints of truth," saying the "heart of the power structure" has been corrupted by a "culture of lying."

The IDF's blatant lies in the face of war crimes allegations erased what little remained from the ■ of credibility of the "most moral army in the world," and in the wake of the Gaza invasion Israel's reputation has suffered successive blows.

The assassination of ■ Hamas leader in Dubai by Mossad agents traveling on the forged passports of friendly countries enraged Israeli allies in Europe and Australia, and a refusal to halt illegal settlement expansion in East Jerusalem has created a serious rift with the United States.

Despite leading efforts to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to attend the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington after learning that Egypt and Turkey intended to criticize Israel for not signing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. While Israel does not discuss its nuclear capabilities it is no secret that the country possesses dozens of nuclear weapons and is the only nuclear power in the Middle East.

The notion of Israel as the righteous bulwark of civilization against the Middle East's barbarian hordes is fast eroding, and the long-standing narrative that has endeared Israel toward the West is shifting as the moral double standards become clearer and more people begin to see Israeli intransigence, dishonesty and aggression ■ the main obstacles to peace.



A FIRST THINGS FIRST PROJECT

TRUTHBOMBS

Help Open the Israeli Mindscape

Adbusters' bold new project aims to air citizen-produced advocacy spots ■ Israeli television

The continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories is one of the key Arab and Muslim grievances with the West and the root of conflict in the ■■■ East.

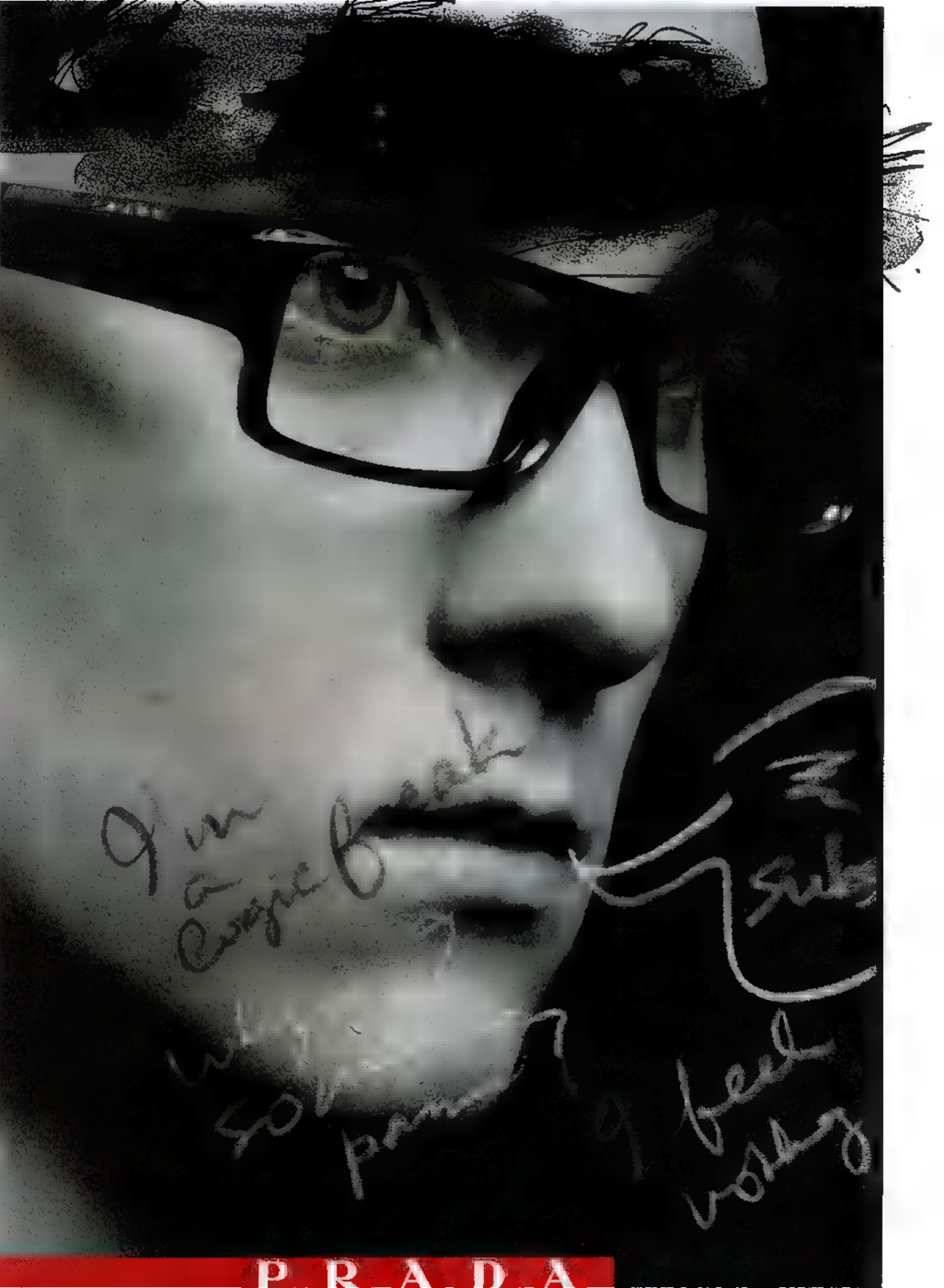
Despite Palestinian resistance and international pressure, it will be the citizens of Israel who will ultimately decide: Either the settlements ■■ evacuated and a Palestinian state is born, or the apartheid system continues and ■■■ blood is shed.

This is your chance to speak ■ the people of Israel directly. Adbusters is launching ■ public awareness campaign on Israel's major television networks and we need your help developing 15, 30 and 60-second advocacy commercials. An inexpensive endeavor with great potential: The spots can be aired for as little ■ ■ few hundred dollars and reach many of Israel's 7.2 million citizens.

Militarized, isolated and afraid, Israelis feel demonized and normally see only condemnation in international opinion. This fresh, new project is ■ ■ opportunity to engage the deciders in ■ fruitful dialogue and help salvage their future ■■ ■■.

Please send your ideas, storyboards, concepts with pictures and complete 15, 30 and 60-second spots to: truthbombs@adbusters.org

Wounded bodies lie outside the Hamas police headquarters following an Israeli air strike in Gaza City on December 27, 2008
Mohammed Abed/AFP/Getty Images



9 in
a
Cage

sub

40
pr

9 best
work

PRADA

Old Man

A 90 year old man
sat on his walker in the cereal aisle
an aisle so long
so comically, absurdly
so grotesquely long
he had to rest
his old American legs

He was hairless
possibly from cancer treatments
but his eyes shined
battles and wits
an eternal youth of sorts
like an old bull elephant

I approached him because
I liked him very much
he was a fighter
he wouldn't be caught dead
on a scooter-cart
neither would I
me and him would rather crawl
than use the scooter-cart

Hello sir
I said to him
and he looked up at me
with a wide
I'm-not-scared-of-death
smile
■ smile that can only be cast
by a man who has dodged bullets

a smile by ■ man who has dodged them
literally
on a beach in Europe

He looked at me with his
smile, with his connection,
his wisdom that was drilled to
the center of the Earth
and he said
Too many choices aren't there?

Far too many choices sir.

I remember when there was just
Corn Flakes and Wheaties.

That sounds fine to me.
I told him.
I asked him if he needed anything:
Need me to reach a box
Guard you through the door
Set this place on fire
Start a new nation
Anything sir, what will it be?

He replied,
Nope
I'm heading to the checkout.
Carry on young man.

Alec Binyon

Late one night when I was seven years old I heard my parents discussing Oswald Spengler's book Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West). And for some reason that idea has always stuck in my mind. Spengler was one of the first guys who realized that there are some fundamental flaws in Western civilization. I would like to see some TV spots and internet viral messages and blogs that start to question this whole kind of Western civilization that we have built up over the last few thousand years, culminating in the most dangerous moment in human history.

Kalle Lasn





MOST EFFICIENT LIVING SYSTEM



MOST EFFICIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM



MOST EFFICIENT BIRTH



James Porto



MOST EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM



MOST EFFICIENT ECONOMIC SYSTEM



MOST EFFICIENT MEDICAL SYSTEM



MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO DIE



"Why do men persist in destroying their environment?"

This was the question asked by the world's first ecopsychologist, Paul Shepard, at the beginning of his classic work *Nature and Madness*. And he did mean men, for his answer was that men are "ontogenetically crippled" by childish fantasies of power. "The West," he believed, "is a vast testimony to childhood botched to serve its own purposes, where history, masquerading as myth, authorizes men of action to alter the world to match their regressive moods of omnipotence and insecurity."



THE ENDLESS CITY

Get used to it. The world is urban and in 50 years it may be weird to find people living in the country. The UN planet-watchers have found not just that we are becoming an urban species but that the world's cities are growing and merging with each other, forming vast "megaregions." These giants are already sprawling across borders and becoming homes to 100 million or more people. Today just over one half of us live in urban areas. By 2050 it will be 7 in 10 and eventually the city will take over.

UN-Habitat's biennial report says urbanization is unstoppable and we should prepare to live in "the endless city." Look back a few hundred years, say the authors, and you can see how places like London, Manchester and Liverpool in England outgrew themselves and merged with towns and villages around them to form conurbations of a few million people. Now cities like Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Shanghai in China are linked by urban corridors and are home to 120m people. Look ahead a bit and you may see Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Brazil, Delhi and Mumbai in India, and even the 77 separate major cities which now stretch from Beijing to Tokyo via Pyongyang to Seoul, all linked together.

Outwardly, the development of these megaregions makes economic and environmental sense. They cover just a fraction of the habitable surface of the earth but are home to nearly 20% of the world's population. They account for 66% of all economic activity and about 85% of technological and scientific innovation. The top 100 account for more than half of the world's wealth, and the five largest cities in India and China now account for 50% of those countries' wealth. They lead development and provide work for the masses, and the money earned in them is sent back and supports the country areas. Cities, in short, are the cradles of culture and wealth and will allow earth to support a further three billion people.

This view is backed by writers like British academic and author Owen Hatherley. "Megalopolises have always horrified environmentalists but they shouldn't. With their relatively short distances easily served by public transport, they are in fact greener than the countryside; a recent academic report estimated that cities produce less than two-fifths of greenhouse gas emissions. What is worrying about the 'endless city' is that it may lack the public spaces and networks that make urban life superior. The cities of hypercapitalism, with their gated communities, 'urban villages', pseudo country villas and private transport, are malevolent because they try to simulate the countryside. The megalopolis

need not be the cause for handwringing."

But the reality is that the world's megacities are becoming sprawling megaslums, with city authorities unable to keep up with their growth and increasing inequality. The same UN report found that 1 billion people – nearly one in six people alive – now live in crowded, substandard housing often without safe drinking water and sanitation. The number is set to rise, especially in Africa, where nearly two-thirds of the world's slum-dwellers live.

Besides, cities do not stop at their borders, says cultural anthropologist and Middlesex University urban studies professor Herbie Girardet, who calls for a complete redesign of how cities work. "Urban living depends on enormous resource consumption. Urban citizens use four times the energy that rural dwellers consume. The characteristic of a truly sustainable city is, first and foremost, that it powers itself entirely by means of renewable energy systems. In nature, waste products are absorbed beneficially back into the environment. Cities don't do that. They work by way of taking resources from one place and dumping them somewhere else causing damage to nature. We need to turn this linear process into a circular process instead."

But what will it be like to live in the endless city? The answer, says British environmentalist Jonathon Porritt, depends not on the size but what on what kind of cities we build. In Europe you can travel through heavily urbanized areas without even being aware that you are in a megalopolis. A long history of parks, open space, civic responsibility and good public transport has not divorced people from the natural world. "Sustainability can certainly be achieved in urban areas. Cities actually have distinct advantages [over rural areas] when it comes to energy and transport," says Porritt.

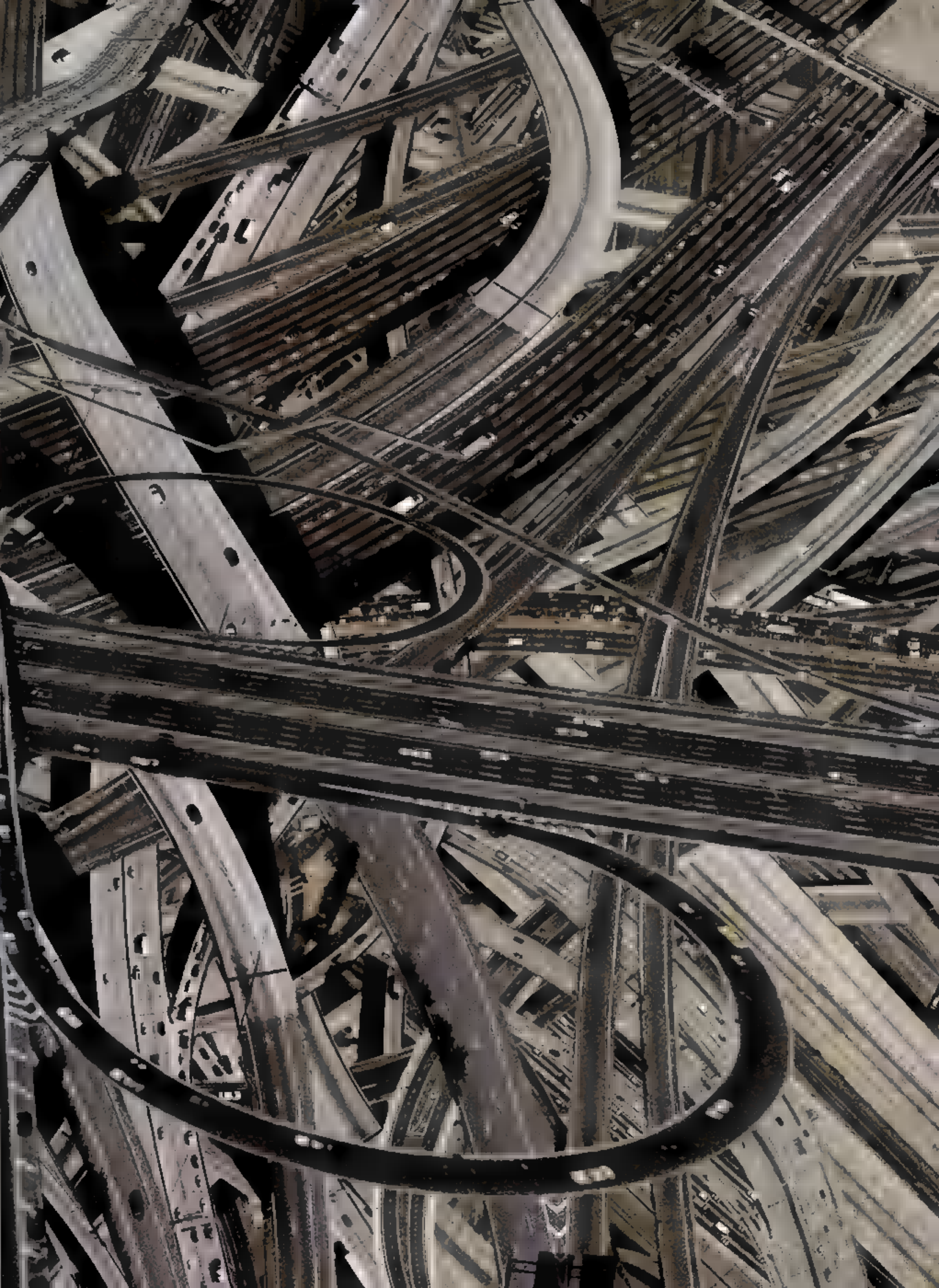
But life in the endless city would be psychologically intolerable without contact with nature, he says. The vast city disconnected from the natural world and impossible to leave becomes a vast prison with potentially terrible consequences for both human society and the planet itself.

"The key is the degree to which the cities of the future allow people to live high quality lives. Without green space sustainability is impossible. Life must include a connection to the natural environment," he says.

John Vidal is the *Guardian's* environment editor.



Depression can lift with the joy arising from listening to the song of a bird.





Our species' hypertrophied linguistic abilities have allowed us to create entire systems composed of elements that we either cannot directly observe or cannot observe at all: mathematics, physics, ideologies, theologies, economies, democracies, political parties and the like, which manipulate abstractions – symbols and relationships between symbols – rather than the concrete, messy, non-atomistic entities that have specific spacial and temporal extents and that constitute reality for all species. There is a continuum between products of pure thought, like logic, and sciences which produce theories that can be tested by repeatable direct experiment, like physics and chemistry, and the rest – political science, economics, sociology and the like – which are a hodgepodge of iffy assumptions and similarly iffy statistical techniques. Perfectly formal systems of thought, like logic and mathematics, seem perfectly rigorous, and have served as the guiding light for all other forms of thinking. But there's a problem.

The problem is that formal systems don't work. They have internal consistency, to be sure, and they perform all sorts of amusing tricks, but they don't map onto reality in a way that isn't essentially an act of violence. When mapped onto real life, formal systems of thought self-destruct, destroy nature, or, most commonly, both. Wherever we look we see systems that we have contrived run against limits of their own making. Burning fossil fuels causes global warming; plastics decay and produce endocrine disruptors; industrial agriculture depletes aquifers and destroys ecosystems; and so on. We are already sitting on a mountain of guaranteed negative outcomes – political, environmental, ecological, economic – and every day those of us who still have a job go to work to pile that mountain a little bit higher.

Although this phenomenon can be observed by anyone who cares to see it, those who have observed it have always laid blame for it on the limitations and flaws of the systems, never on the limitations and the flaws of the human ability to think and to reason. For some un-reason, we feel that our ability to reason is limitless and infinitely perfectable. Aristotle has voiced the idea that the exercise of our ability to think can reach the point of diminishing, but this proposition has never yet to be persuasively shown. That the human propensity for abstract reasoning is a defect of breeding that leads to collective insanity. Perhaps the cure must have to be made recursively: The faculty in question is so flawed that it is incapable of seeing its own flaws.

Dmitry Orlov
borlov.blogspot.com

LIFE IS A DOWNER
AND THEN YOU DIE



LIFE IS AN INCREDIBLE
ADVENTURE. WHAT A RIDE!

If the old American dream, was about prosperity,
maybe the new one will be about spontaneity.



Dancing when you don't
know the next step





Don't play all the notes you could play.
But wait, hesitate, play what's not there.

Concentrate, concentrate, in the silence.
And be receptive, you mustn't want.

Don't think even...the
brain is a bit dangerous.



You're scared
You're excited



You have no time to
to think about the future.


We break out of society's freeze on our passions, we become animals again. We feel the tug of the full moon, hear goose music overhead. We love the Earth and rage against her destroyers. We open ourselves to relationships with one another, with the land; we dare to love, to feel for something – someone – else. And when that final kiss of life – death – comes, we don't hide, but rather go joyously into that good night.

Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*



THE BIG BANG?
WHY IS THERE SOMETHING
INSTEAD OF NOTHING?



A large, dark silhouette of a human hand is positioned on the left side of the image, with the index finger pointing upwards towards the text. The background is a deep black night sky filled with numerous stars of varying brightness and some faint, wispy clouds.

Go out on a starry night.

Look up. And there, beneath the firmament of night, are a million galaxies, each a hundred thousand light years across.

Our universe contains 100 billion galaxies, each containing billions of stars - which is but an inconceivable speck.

Then remember that the Big Bang - the event that gave birth to the universe - is still happening out there. A billion light years away, we can still 'see' the expanding wall of light.

The lightning happened almost every night for as long as they could remember.

Brilliant bolts would slap the ground below. The light show lasted up to nine hours a night, zapping out as many as 20,000 bolts.

Until last January, when the lightning suddenly vanished, leaving Venezuela in the dark. Scientists suspect the mysterious casualty is El Niño, which has caused a drought, extinguished conditions ripe for discharges. Others feel the disappearance is a portent of things to come, a sign of how the world is changing. The last time the lightning returned in 1906, after a major earthquake that set off a tsunami. Then, the lightning returned.

But the lightning is still missing, and no one knows why.

Paloma Friedman



the universe PSYCHIC CRUMB

...I don't know?

...you say, ID ANSWER!


...at's an answer at all. It's just a description
of a causal process.

The fact is, we don't know where babies come from.

You get married, you're sitting at a table having
breakfast – there are two of you – and a year later
there's somebody else sitting there. And if you're honest
with yourself, you don't know where they came from.

They come literally out of nowhere, and they keep
growing and if you stop to think about it, which you don't,
because it's annoying, it's upsetting, then it's a total mystery.

Ernest Becker


The background of the slide is a map of the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) radiation. It shows a complex pattern of red and orange hues, representing the temperature fluctuations of the early universe. The pattern is dense and textured, with brighter yellow and white spots indicating higher temperatures and darker red areas indicating lower temperatures. The overall effect is a sense of vastness and cosmic scale.

THE BRAIN COSMIC CRUMB

Fourteen years ago neuroscientists introduced the world to a captivating new idea about the way our brains might work: they discovered the existence of specialized brain cells in the brains of macaque monkeys that are activated both when a monkey performs an intentional action (e.g. grabbing a banana) and when it sees another monkey performing that action. They called these special brain cells *mirror neurons* since the monkeys mirrored in their own minds the actions of their neighbors. Scientists learned that at the brain level, *monkey see* was not so different from *monkey do*.

Even before researchers confirmed the existence of similar mirror neurons in human brains, which they did in 2007, the idea had worked its way into the zeitgeist and become a potent new way of seeing ourselves in relationship with each other. People have begun to wonder if mirror neurons could be responsible for language, culture, empathy and even morality. Where Darwinian survival of the fittest has heretofore imagined us as the strong pitted against the weak in a fatal struggle for food and sex, the mirror neuron suggests the importance of social strengths: that we are hardwired for empathy, that we are naturally interested not only in our own needs but also in the interests of others. As noted philosopher A.C. Grayling has said: "The essential point is that mirror neurons underwrite the ability to recognize what helps or distresses others, what they suffer and enjoy, what they need and what harms them."

Andrew Tuplin



Island: A Bare Skeleton of Being

In the summer of 2009, photographer Roderik Henderson used the bare, windowless, fluorescent space of an elevator as his studio. The people were not comfortable. Placement, disappeared. Any personal manifestation or personality evaporated.

GOD IS ONE



SO HOW'S IT GOING TO END UP -

for us and for the Earth?

Will we consume until there's nothing left?

Will we topple headlong over the tipping point,
reduced to pumping sulfur into the atmosphere
just to buy a little more time?

Or maybe the world's poor will rise in rebellious
jihad, razing our decadent temple and forcing us to
build anew - to live in more humble, sustainable ways.

Or perhaps one day, not so far into the future,
astronomers will intercept a message from beyond:

"You are not alone.

You have company in this universe.

Open your eyes to what's important on Earth."

Tightrope Walker



THAT'S YOU!

Jitka Hanzlová
Untitled (Forest 25, Tightrope Walker), 2002
Courtesy Mai 36 Galerie, Zurich

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PEOPLE OF THE WORLD RISE UP!

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